‘Hair economies’: power and ethics in an ethnographic study of female African hairdressers in Cape Town

by

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Date: March 2017

Abstract

In this empirical study, which focused on power and ethics, I explored the relationship between the researcher and the research participant in the context of migrant African women in Cape Town. The study, located in hair styling salons, had dual aims; one ethnographic and the other methodological. In the ethnographic context of the hair salons, I sought to analyse how female migrants from African countries chose specific economic activities that express their cultural or gendered identities. Methodologically, this study was aimed at identifying and analysing how the power between the researcher and the research participants impacted on a study of migrant women's experiences, with specific consideration of the social and economic contexts within which research participants navigate and assert their own agency. Participant observation was used as the primary data collection method, a method that I used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews. For a period of 12 weeks, between May 2013 and August 2013 I entered and engaged the social world of migrants and hair salons in Mowbray, Cape Town. From the onset securing access to the research field and participants proved to be a challenge since initial possibilities of access to a primary identified site was denied. Through a process of negotiation and securing access, I, as researcher had to confront issues of privilege in relation to migrants, even though my race and gender provided me with a degree of intersectionality in relation to African migrant women. Further, I found that not only does migrant women`s ownership and labour in hair salons disrupt imagined ideas about their mobility, but also that they asserted their agency by presenting me, the researcher, with a protracted set of rules of engagement. This resolved, to a degree, their vulnerability and my power as a researcher. By default, I managed to find a salon owner willing to grant access. The aim of the study was to interview the owner of the hair salon as well as the four hairstylists but only two stylists agreed to being interviewed. Findings from this research show the complexities of power relations between the researcher and the research participants. African migrant women in scholarship are imagined in a gendered context and almost always in relation to their partners as the primary decision-maker around migration. This study shows how African migrant women facilitate their own agency in the context of migration and how the hair styling industry provides them with a range of economic possibilities. The study further shows, notwithstanding their vulnerability as migrants, how African women in this research project exercised their agency as women by refusal, self-silencing, determining the level and measure of participation and the content of discussions.

Opsomming

In hierdie empiriese studie, wat op mag en etiek gefokus was, het ek die verhouding tussen die navorser en die navorsingsdeelnemer in die konteks van vrouemigrante uit Afrika in Kaapstad ondersoek. Die studie, gesitueer in haarstileringsalonne, het tweeledige oogmerke gehad; een, etnografies en die ander metodologies. In die etnografiese konteks van die haarsalonne was my doel om te analiseer hoe vroulike migrante uit Afrika-lande spesifieke ekonomiese aktiwiteite gekies het wat aan hul kulturele of "gegenderde" identiteite uitdrukking gegee het. Metodologies gesproke was hierdie studie gemik op die identifisering en analise van hoe die mag tussen die navorser en die navorsingsdeelnemers 'n studie van vrouemigrante se ervarings beïnvloed, met spesifieke oorweging van die sosiale en ekonomiese kontekste waarbinne navorsingsdeelnemers agentskap navigeer en laat geld. Deelnemer-observasie is as die primêre data-insameling-metode gebruik, en ek het hierdie metode in samehang met semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gebruik. Vir 'n tydperk van 12 weke, tussen Mei 2013 en Augustus 2013, het ek die sosiale wêreld van migrante en haarsalonne in Mowbray, Kaapstad, betree en daaraan deelgeneem. Uit die staanspoor was die uitdaging om toegang tot die navorsingsarea en deelnemers te verkry, aangesien aanvanklike toegangsmoontlikhede tot 'n primêre geïdentifiseerde navorsingsterrein geweier is. Deur die onderhandelingsproses en die verkryging van toegang, moes ek, as navorser, vrae oor bevoorregting in verhouding met migrante konfronteer, selfs al het my ras en gender aan my 'n mate van interseksionaliteit in verhouding met vrouemigrante uit Afrika verskaf. Verder het ek gevind dat vrouemigrante se eienaarskap en arbeid in haarsalonne nie net veronderstellings oor hul mobiliteit versteur nie, maar ook dat hierdie vroue hul agentskap laat geld het deur aan my, die navorser, 'n uitgebreide stel reëls van interaksie te voorsien. Dit het, tot 'n mate, hul kwesbaarheid en my mag as 'n navorser uit die weg geruim. By verstek was ek in staat om 'n saloneienaar te vind wat bereid was om toegang te verleen. Die doel van die studie was om met die eienaar van die haarsalon, asook die vier haarstileerders, onderhoude te voer, maar slegs twee stileerders het ingestem tot onderhoude. Bevindings uit hierdie navorsing toon die kompleksiteite van die magsverhouding tussen die navorser en die navorsingsdeelnemers. In akademieskap word vrouemigrante uit Afrika in 'n "gegenderde" konteks voorgestel, en bykans altyd in verhouding tot hul lewensmaat as die primêre besluitnemer rakende migrasie. Die studie toon dat vrouemigrante uit Afrika hul eie agentskap rakende migrasie fasiliteer en dat die haarstileringsbedryf aan hulle eindelose ekonomiese moontlikhede bied. Die studie toon verder dat, ten spyte van hul kwesbaarheid as migrante, Afrika-vroue in hierdie navorsingsprojek hul agentskap as vroue uitgeoefen het deur weiering, die keuse om self stil te bly, en die bepaling van die vlak en mate van deelname, asook van die inhoud van besprekings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Comedian Chris Rock produced a thought provoking and insightful documentary called Good Hair (2009) about the multi-billion-dollar hair industry in the United States of America. The main objective of the documentary was to understand the hair culture of African-American women. The documentary provides a candid account of the complexities of black hair and black hairstyling and its relation to black women's identities globally.

While this study similarly seeks to understand the complexities of black hair culture, it will restrict its focus to the South African city of Cape Town – which has in recent times seen a significant increase in hair salons for black women – specifically salons managed and owned by female immigrants to the city from other parts of Africa. Factors that motivated this interest in the hair salon as a research site include the discernible growth in the number of black haircare facilities in Cape Town, insights from the documentary, as well as the considerable number of years I spent abroad as a student, during which time I engaged in low level employment to make ends meet, and continuously felt vulnerable and at the whim of immigration officials. Whilst my reasons for living and working abroad differ from those of many migrants in South Africa, very little distinction is made by immigration officials as to the purpose and reasons for foreign nationals' relocations.

There has been an influx of African migrants into South Africa, post-independence, many of whom come to the country seeking better prospects following protracted conflict and political and economic instability in their home countries. However, these migrants quickly learn on arrival that inequality in post-apartheid South Africa affects not only South Africans but also migrant communities. In post-apartheid South Africa the pursuit of economic freedom and safety has prompted many South Africans and African im/migrants alike to engage in what Thabo Mbeki – in his address at the 62nd session of the United Nation's General Assembly – termed 'the Second Economy' (2007), which are those activities deemed to fall outside the regulatory framework of state, civil society and business. One could argue that these hair salons constitute part of the Second Economy as many of the salons operate on a cash basis with little to no compliance with the South African Revenue Service.

My experience as a foreigner in another country prompted me to both reflect on and seek an understanding of the experiences of female migrants to Cape Town. I had a particular and keen interest in exploring the dimensions of power between the researcher and the researched

within the context of the hair salon. This interest stemmed from the duality of my experience as a student and a volunteer engaging in low level jobs in the United Kingdom and, coupled with the fact that I am a black female like the research participants. For the purpose of this paper I wish to frame the term black female as a category that combines the biological markers of race and gender as well as it being a social construct. As a black woman, not only do I frequent hair salons on a regular basis, but I also grapple with cultural, political and social tensions around my hair as a key component of my identity, which is why I identified the hair salon as a good site in which to conduct my research. I am equally aware that this site provides an interesting juxtaposition between the researcher and the researched, with specific reference to power relations.

The politics of black hair and the extent to which a woman's identity is tied up in her hair is highlighted by Zimitri Erasmus (1997) in her article *'Oe my hare gaan huis toe*': hair-styling as black cultural practice'. Ingrid Banks (2000) in *Hair Matters, Beauty and Power* similarly emphasises the social and cultural significance of hair and the extent to which a black woman's identity is entangled in her hair. Both scholars depart from the premise that a black woman's hair plays an important role insofar as it relates to her own ideas of identity as well as how she relates to other women and men in this context.

The phenomenon of 'hair-talk', which refers to conversations black women have among themselves about their hair and hairstyles, is another ongoing and often contentious topic for many black women as depicted in many scholarly writings and in the public discourse around black women and their hair. Lanita Jacobs-Huey asserts that the choices women make about hairstyles transcend 'aesthetics, and are influenced by such considerations as the desire or selection of a mate, public and main stream perceptions of beauty, the influence of the professional environment women find themselves in as well as cultural and ethnic pride' (2006:3). I can personally attest to this: upon entering the research site – one of the hair salons studied – I was confronted by one of the salon's clients who appealed to me to consider styling my hair in a weave rather than dreadlocks 'as it will make me look more beautiful'. Such conceptions of beauty, coupled with my own perceptions of identity, prompted me to adopt a reflexive approach over the course of the research project.

In summation, this research project seeks to analyse the dimensions of power and ethics between the researcher and the researched within the context of an ethnographic research project, which focuses on women hairdressers who are migrants from other parts of Africa

and who have settled in South Africa, specifically in Cape Town. The study thus encompasses dual aims: one ethnographic and the other methodological.

At an ethnographic level, the study will examine how African female migrants to Cape Town select specific economic activities, which express their cultural and gendered identity. Here I refer to the work of Rose Weitz (2001) who identifies the significance of hair and how women wear or style it as representing a means of resistance and accommodation in their assertion of power. Weitz suggests that 'women are often acutely aware of the cultural expectation regarding their hair' (2001: 682). Thus, in the light of Weitz's study, one can note a close link between the women engaging in the economic activities as explored by this research and their identity both in a cultural and gendered context.

Methodologically, this study explores the dimensions of power between the researcher and the research participants, particularly considering the social and economic situationality of the research participants which I believe potentially contains an element of vulnerability.

I have opted to contextualise my research within a standpoint theory framework and to place it in a postcolonial context. These theoretical lenses provide me with an optic through which to examine issues of identity, power, reflexivity, positionality and ethics within the research project.

1.2 Motivation

My struggles with my own identity, and the extent to which it is defined and influenced by my hair, motivated me to use this very personal and political path to frame my research. From the conceptualisation phase of this project onwards I was challenged as a researcher to reflect, not only on my personal experiences of being a migrant resident in the United Kingdom, but also to reflect on my position as a black female located within the academy as a student, and thus conferred a social perspective that contrasts significantly with that of other black females not privy to the same privileges.

Since this study is both ethnographic and methodological, I was able, from an ethnographic point of view, to immerse myself in an environment that allowed me to provide what Geertz describes as a 'thick description' (1973:3) of the context within which this study was conducted. I departed from a feminist standpoint theory perspective, as it allows for the contextualisation of the female researcher conducting research among other females, which according to Diane Wolf (1996) is 'crucial in gaining knowledge and understanding of other

women'. My research in this arena is particularly informed by Patricia Collins, who asserts that Black Feminist Standpoint Theory advocates for the recognition of 'shared histories...' – between the researcher and the research participant – '...based on their shared location in relation to power' (1997:376). Collins further makes specific reference to the shared experiences of oppression as relating to the daily lived experiences of black people the world over (1991:41). In the case of my study population, the apparent similarities that we shared by virtue of being female and black, evoked a few concerns and anxieties about equality and privilege, as eloquently discussed by Dorothy Roberts (1997) in *Killing the Black Body*. While Roberts conducted her research on the implications of forced and coercive reproductive policies or practices on black women, she asked critical questions about her own status as a black female academic with specific reference to the similarities and discontinuities between her own experiences and those of her research participants. Based on Collins's assertion in regards to standpoint theory, I found the notion of shared histories useful as a starting point, and one which allowed me to engage with the research participants from a vantage point of communality. The most notable similarities between myself, as the researcher, and the research participants include that we are black, female and that we have experienced living in a country other than our own in addition to the social, cultural and political issues relating to our hair.

Roberts's assertions regarding the similarities and discontinuities between a researcher on the one hand and a research participant on the other, led me to an acute awareness of my position as a South African conducting a study on foreign nationals in South Africa. I concur with Joy Owen (2005:125) who, in her study of refugees, argues that a South African researcher gazing in their 'home space' at the 'Other' is placed in a position of power relative to that 'Other'. I was aware, throughout the research process, of my privilege and power and the contrast between my circumstances and the lived experiences of the research participants. This power differential and inequality was particularly evident insofar as it related to my selection of a research site, as well as my access to educational, social, political and economic opportunities as a citizen, in contrast to the bureaucratic constraints and limited opportunities available to the migrant women from other African countries living in South Africa; I could thus not deny my privilege in this context.

Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwall note that the debates pertaining to ethics in ethnography overwhelmingly occur at the 'level of practice' (2001:340). I have a particular interest in ethics at the level of practice, as well as the dimensions of power between the

researched and the research participant within the field of ethnography. At a primary level, my motivation for embarking on this research project was informed by Heike Becker et al's observation, in relation to research practices in southern Africa, that 'reflections on ethics and power in the field 'at home' [meaning studying the researcher's country of origin] remain rare' (2005:123).

The power differential between myself, the researcher, and the subjects of the study was not the only challenging dynamic of the study. The women participating in the study also had to contend with my curiosity regarding their experiences of migrant mobility and settlement, and they could thus have been justified in feeling that, because of my investigation, their status as migrant females were being reinforced and perhaps even threatened. Therefore, despite my deliberate decision and effort not to enter the research field or engage the research participants with the assumption that all women migrants are vulnerable and in search of liberty and modernity, they nonetheless interrogated my motivation(s) for undertaking this study.

Regarding the nature of the study population, namely female migrants, I wish to turn to Lisa Pfeifer (2008) who suggests that migration theory generally presumes the mobility of men as a reason for certain migratory patterns, whereas women are regarded as the 'tied' or bonded partner. Pfeifer maintains that the traditional configuration, of the man as independent and mobile and women as dependent, prevails within migration theory. While this study is not primarily concerned with the location of women in migration theory, migration is an aspect that remains central when considering issues that affect migrant women. Historically, women are wrongly understood as simply in pursuit of liberty and modernity but always in truncated relationship to men (Kok 2006:37). Similarly, Kofman et.al assert that a woman's migration status is often granted conditionally and tied in to that of her spouse. They further note that even as independent migrants the types of employment available to women are at times considered invisible or low level opportunities (Kofman et.al 2000). My interest in this study was to interrogate the ways in which women activate and utilise resources within the context of migration, and to understand why they engage in economic activities such as the hair salon business.

Having considered the social and historical context within which this research was conducted, and the selected research population – migrants from Africa to South Africa – I now turn to a consideration of the literature on migration and postcolonialism as it pertains to

this study. In recent decades, scholars have increasingly promoted the idea that postmodernism, globalization and, lately post-colonialism, represent periods that mark not only the transnational movement of capital and commodities, but also of people, beliefs, and cultural practices. These issues have been variously discussed by cultural theorists. Talal Asad (2003) in his *Formations of the Secular* discusses how the movement of religious and cultural groups across the world has disrupted notions of modernity and secularity, while Homi Bhabha (1999) in his *Nation and Narration* offers an interventionist reading into the idea that nationhood and national identity are fixed or stable categories, and ultimately, he challenges the distinction between First World 'nation' and Third World 'nation'. Similarly, Paul Gilroy (1993) in his critically acclaimed text, *The Black Atlantic,* introduced a turning point in diaspora studies by arguing that instead of imaging the black diaspora in terms of a common origin, one needs rather to imagine black ideas as the result of cultural exchange made possible by 'routes' around the Atlantic. While these critical theorists have tended to focus on cultural adaptations as a result of migration and its disruption of social and national identities, not much has been written about how migration has informed new economic practices among migrants – and even less so as it pertains to women.

There is a dearth of research dealing with the economic and cultural agency of migrant women in the production of their social and economic mobility. It is the intention of this study, therefore, to contribute to that effort. In recent years, several volumes have been published that address the issue of women and migration. Jacqueline Knörr and Barbara Meier's *Women and Migration: Anthropological Perspectives* (2000) is one such text, which, while offering a global overview of women's experiences of migration, limits itself to women's self-(re)presentation solely in terms of the cultural. Similarly, Brenda Gray's; *Women and Irish Diaspora* (2004) and Caroline Brettell's *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity and identity* (2004) restrict their focus to women in Irish and Portuguese cultural contexts respectively.

My reason for engaging with migrant women in the context of hair salons is motivated by my own experience of the hair salon as a simultaneously personal and political space. Here I wish to return to Weitz's assertion that 'women's hair is central to their social position' (Weitz 2001: 667). It appears to me that women's hair salons in Cape Town – which largely cater for the needs of black migrant women and a nominal number of primarily black South African women - establish a zone of exception where African migrant women engage with other black women in economic exchange and mediation of identities. In this space, migrant

women appear able to engage in practices of commodification and the 'borrowing and mixing' of culturally specific hairstyling practices from different regions on the continent. They seem to have created a melting pot within which a range of ethnic and national cultural elements can find expression through 'cosmetic hairstyling' practices, premised on both innovation and tradition. In the context of the salon, specific hairstyling practices and techniques are delineated according to their country of origin; thus, these practices are 'consumed' by clients who attach cultural and political meaning to each 'style'. The complex nature of this hairstyling business made me curious about the strategies that migrant women employ to activate and maintain their economic mobility. For the female salon owners, 'selling' a hairstyle as from a specific region or country – even where invented and merely portrayed as authentic – increases the opportunity to generate income, which allows for personal financial stability and survival away from home. It is in these spaces that I sought access to the hair salon to gain an understanding of the processes undertaken by African female migrants that have moved to Cape Town when choosing economic activities by which to sustain themselves and the conditions under which their cultural and gendered identities find meaning. In recognition of the fact that hair salons are highly intimate and often private spaces, I soon became aware that sensitive negotiation between myself, as the researcher, and the salon owners, as the gate-keepers, would be required to gain access to what are considered very safe spaces by the women who frequent hair salons. The hair salon is often regarded as a space where women can share their intimate secrets and concerns without fear of being judged; and where a sense of camaraderie can be cultivated between the stylist and the client. Clients trust the hairstylist to not only style their hair, but to also create a relaxing and comfortable environment, and it is in this conducive atmosphere that clients are encouraged to become regular frequenters of the salon. In her book, *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care*, Lanita Jacobs-Huey notes that through her ethnographic eye she considers hair salons as 'sites of regularized interaction not around simply the giving and receiving of hair care, but cultural exchanges about life' (Jacobs-Huey 2006:17).

In my own experience with hair salons, the sense of camaraderie and intimacy I encountered motivated me to return as a client. Jacobs-Huey observes this very nature of trust established between client and stylists, and the extent to which stylists become what she calls 'hair doctors' in their dealings nappy, 'kinky, curly and essentially bad hair' (Jacobs-Huey 2006:107) also colloquially referred to as *'kroes hare'* (Erasmus 1997:12)

Negotiating research access into such an environment was at times tense and charged with suspicion, which was not restricted solely to the salon owner, but extended to her employees and to some extent the clients who would invariably be affected by this research project, whether directly or indirectly. During my initial contact with hair salons, while seeking permission to gain access to the site for research purposes, I was very aware that my status as a South African citizen was received with suspicion for various reasons, ranging from among others, mistrust based on the ongoing attacks on black African foreign nationals; fear among salon staff that their immigration status could be challenged or exposed; as well as general mistrust of the research process and the unknown. I was made acutely aware of the competitive nature of the salon industry, which further raised suspicion regarding my possible interest in 'trade secrets' and how my research had the potential to compromise the basis on which these women depended for their livelihood. Much of the literature pertaining to research on hair has mainly focused on issue of identity (Jacobs-Huey 2004, 2006; Erasmus 1997) apart from Nyamnjoh et al. (2002) who focus on the commodification of hair.

While there is undoubtedly a great deal more research that could be done on the relation between migration and economics in general, this study has been limited to the specific experience and contributions of women. There are few publications that address gender and migration in Africa, and where they do, women are generally regarded as dependent migrants. There is a need for studies that focus on labour migration by migrant women, or that imagine their economic as well as social mobility without neglecting a consideration of their social and cultural identities.

1.3 Research Problem

This research seeks to explore the power dimensions between researcher and research participant and the ethical implications thereof, specifically in relation to research on migrant women involved in the hairstyling industry. It further seeks to understand why the hairstyling industry appeals to migrant women as an economic activity. While much of the available literature on women's migration does focus on the economic activities with which these women are involved, including inter alia domestic work, care work, prostitution etc., there is scant focus on the hair industry as an economic activity. Hence the focus of this study. Notwithstanding this, however, it is important to consider that research involving human beings is inherently fraught with ethical challenges. This study thus seeks to investigate the potential ethical dilemmas I may encounter when conducting research with female migrants in Cape Town. It further seeks to highlight how I as a researcher will

manage such dilemmas. Power dynamics between the researcher and the researched is almost always inevitable when conducting research with human beings. This study is also geared towards addressing how I as the researcher as well as the research participants managed such dynamics and its influence on the study.

With respect to this research study and the research problem it articulates, not only does it seek to interrogate the ethics and power within the research setting; it also sets out to explore the context itself within which the research was conducted. Dorrit Posel (2003) posed one of the questions central to this investigation: To what extent have migration patterns changed in post-apartheid changed? It is precisely within the context of migratory patterns that my study seeks to investigate and understand how African female migrants utilise hair salons to assert and promote distinct cultural identities, and how they reconfigure this economic niche to facilitate their independence from the host culture, as well as from male migrants. It is in order to engage in these kinds of exchanges with the research participants that I selected the hair salons in Mowbray as my research site to gain critical insights into the social and economic innovation of African female migrants to Cape Town. My research question is thus framed as follows: What are the ethical dimensions of the power relations between the researcher and the research participant in a study which seeks to explore why African female migrants to Cape Town choose particular economic activities and how do the economic activities in question relate to the expressions of these women's cultural identity?

1.4 Chapter Outline

This section provides a brief outline of each of the chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study including my motivation for embarking on the study in terms of my methodological and ethnographic interests. This chapter also provides a rationale for exploring issues of power between the researcher and the research participant(s) in an ethnographic study of African migrant women to South Africa who work in hair styling salons in Cape Town. Chapter 1 also provides a brief introduction into research ethics as well as an outline of the research problem that is the focus of study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature by scholars of research ethics and a synopsis of the key debates in this field. This chapter then discusses ethics in ethnography, presenting dimensions of power within the research setting. It further looks at debates pertaining to gender and positionality in relation to African female migrants.

Chapter 3 addresses a theoretical framework underpinned by two theoretical canons: the first, Feminism, and specifically, Black Feminist Thought, provides a framework for the exploration of positionality and reflexivity in the context of my research project; then, secondly, Postcolonialism, is utilised as an optic through which to consider power and identity.

Chapter 4 presents the key methodological decisions, strategies and practices relating to the selection of the research site and sample. This is followed by a discussion on the process involved in negotiating access to both the field and research participants. Thereafter follows a discussion on the research instruments used to collect data.

Chapter 5 contains the organization of data derived from research participants' responses to the researcher's queries and observations. In this chapter the data is presented in three broad categories addressing the central questions of the study, namely (1) narratives of migration; (2) labour and migration economies; and (3) hairstyling practices.

Chapter 6 brings together the discussion on and analysis of the collected data, thereby weaving together the key theoretical concerns on race, gender and ethics in migration studies. The key research findings pertaining to research ethics and gender in migration is presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to the study which presents a summary of (1) the central research question, (2) the method, (3) the key findings pertaining to power and ethics in the researcher-researched relationship, and incorporating a brief discussion of issues for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review of Research Ethics

Historically research ethics emerged as a result of direct and at times deliberate harm by researchers to research participants. Thus, ethical codes and guidelines were devised to protect the vulnerable. Such ethical codes are primarily aimed at research practices within the bio-medical field concerned with conducting research with human beings. Increasingly as shown in this literature review an emergence of ethical guidelines became necessary in the social sciences field as it became clear the extent to which human beings were harmed within this field. This chapter thus provides an overview of the evolution of ethical codes and the extent to which this influences research. In this chapter I have opted for a thematic approach and divided it into three sections: the first gives an overview of the historically significant moments and debates that facilitated the emergences of research ethics; the second explores the extent to which research ethics has influenced ethnographic research by providing an account of scholarly contributions and debates in the field; and thirdly, as this study has a specific ethnographic focus, this review also pays particular attention to the link between research ethics and the migration with specific reference to African women migrants.

Ethics plays an important role in research and I wish to draw on Marylis Guillemin and Lynn Gillam (2004) who assert that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure at every level and stage of the research process, during fieldwork and during post-fieldwork analysis, that ethical principles are followed. Guillemin and Gillam also highlight the need for a researcher to have a heightened awareness of any potential unanticipated and/or unintended harm that the research participant may encounter as a result of the research project. Researchers are also required to ensure that they act not solely in their own self-interest, but in the interest of the research participant, continuously reflecting on their conduct in the field to make sure that the research participant is protected. All researchers are bound by an ethical code and for this paper I will focus on non-maleficence; beneficence, autonomy/self-determination and justice (Murphy and Dingwall 2001). These principles are key elements for the researcher to consider when conducting ethical and sound research. Ethics is deemed to consist of two dimensions: one is procedural, while the other is practical. The rest of this section explores the broader dimensions relating to the procedural and practical application of ethics.

I understand procedural ethics to be the requirements proposed, enforced and monitored by institutions and research agencies to ensure inter alia: that researchers adhere to the basic principle of doing no harm; that they protect the welfare and rights of research participants;

gain informed consent from research participants; and promote autonomy and justice at all costs within the field (Guillemin and Gillam 2004). The independence of review boards allows for ethical accountability and responsibility through the intentional deliberation, by qualified persons not involved in the study under review, on the risks pertaining to a research undertaking; and it is for this reason that ethical review now assumes such a central position within the research process.

As this study was focused on research ethics I deemed it necessary to comply with institutional ethical clearance. Compliance with University of Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee ethical clearance requirements was a prerequisite for me to pursue my investigation into the dimensions of power between researcher and research participant while seeking to understand why African migrant women engage in certain economic activities. This called for me to engage in careful consideration and reflection on the various potential scenarios that might expose the research participants to possible risk and to devise a strategy to mitigate and adequately respond to any such risks. On reviewing my application, the Ethics Committee was satisfied that I had submitted a satisfactory motivation regarding the potential ethical issues associated with my research, and I was thus granted ethical clearance which enabled me to proceed with my research. It is important to note that ethical clearance granted by no means concluded the ethical considerations of my research process and that ethics in practice is as important to the research project.

Research ethics in practice can be described as the obligation of the researcher to have a deep awareness of any possible unanticipated and unintended harm that may be encountered by the research participant as a result of the research project; and, being mindful of this, the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that ethical principles are followed at every level of engagement during a research project, from research design, during fieldwork and during post-fieldwork.

The different stages of the research process – from the interaction with research participants, to the handling of data, coding, analysis, writing, reporting, publication and storage – are all subject to important ethical considerations. It is also important to bear in mind that the period following fieldwork consists of more than analysis and equally has ethical implications. All aspects and stages of the research process further require the researcher to act first and foremost in the interests of research participants; for the researcher to continuously reflect not only on his or her conduct in the field but also the extent to which the research participant is

protected and to adopt or implement remedial action where any threat to the research participant is identified. As Nina Hoel so eloquently agues in 'Embodying the Field: A Researcher's reflections in power dynamics, positionality and the nature of research relationships' (2013), the delineation of procedural ethics and ethics in practice emerged from a long history of the violation of the rights of research participants by researchers. Therefore, the focus of the next section will be an overview of the historically significant moments in the development of ethical codes in research that were developed to strengthen the protection of research participants.

2.1.1 Historically Important Moments in Research Ethics

Allan Brandt (1978), in his article 'Racism and Research: The case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study', reminds us of the serious ethically compromised and deeply disturbing factors at issue in a medical experiment initiated in 1932 by the United States Public Health Service in Macon County Alabama. The study, which sought to ascertain the natural course of untreated latent syphilis in black males, involved approximately 600 black male participants (400 with syphilis and 200 without syphilis). Penicillin had by this stage been discovered and was the preferred cure for syphilis; however, researchers knowingly refrained from administering the treatment to observe how the disease would progress within the affected participants. In the light of this, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study of 1932 should, in Brandt's opinion be deemed 'ethically unjustified' (1978: 26). Brandt further concluded that the Tuskegee Study in 'retrospect revealed more about the pathology of racism than the pathology of syphilis' (Brandt 1978:27). It is widely agreed among scholars (Brandt 1978; Heintzelman 1996; Alvino 2003 and Hesse-Biber 2010) that the deliberate and blatant abuse of power in the Tuskegee Study is to be considered as one of the significantly important moments that contributed toward the design of an ethical code for researchers and debates about informed consent in research. The lack of consent by the Tuskegee participants highlight just how egregious the abuse of power was by the researcher. This drives home the significance of informed consent within the development of ethical codes.

Simmerling et al. (2007) in the article 'Introducing a New Paradigm for Ethical Research in Social, Behavioural and Biomedical Sciences (Part 1)', draw our attention to the ethical challenges that resulted from Nazi medical experimentation on human subjects – mainly Jewish, but also other vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, homosexuals, Roma and Slavic people. Simmerling et al. note that the doctors who conducted the medical experiments '...in their defence argued that they could not have violated standards for the

ethical conduct of research, since no such standards existed' (2007:841). The Nuremburg Code, which was promulgated as a response to the unethical research undertaken during the Nazi era, emerged as the first international code of ethics, which had a significant impact on ethical practices in bio-medical research as it set guidelines for ethical practices for working with human subjects (Ross et al. 2010; Simmerling 2007; Hazelgrove 2002).

However, the Nuremburg Code cannot be credited with successfully ending research-related ethical violations. Walter Robinson and Brandon Unruh (2008) argue that the Willowbrook Hepatitis experiment, which started in 1955 and was conducted by Dr. Saul Krugman, constituted 'one of the most serious breaches of research ethics of the post-World War period' (2008: 80). The Willowbrook Experiment, which spanned a 15-year period and involved medical experimentation on children with mental disabilities, is regarded as another key milestone that catalysed further development of research ethics codes. David, J. Rothman and Sheila, M. Rothman (2005) in *Willowbrook Wars: Bringing the Mentally Disabled into the Community,* argue that this case was characterised by the scientists' seemingly deliberate abuse of their authority by conducting dangerous and often fatal experiments without the participants' (or their guardian's) consent. Michael Ely (2014) who in a recent conference paper entitled 'Disinterestedness at Willowbrook', offers a critical exploration of the debates related to the Willowbrook experiment and suggests that Dr Krugman was not driven by malicious intent but rather by a notion of 'disinterest', which resulted in his viewing the research participants as 'docile bodies in a laboratory' as opposed to human beings entitled to dignified treatment (2014:3). David Rothman's article, 'Were Tuskegee and Willowbrook Studies in Nature?' (1982) is located within a tradition of revisionist reading of the Willowbrook experiment, wherein the researcher is viewed as a passive observer of the natural course of a natural process or disease. However, these views are among the minority: most scholars regard the research approach adopted in the Tuskegee and Willowbrook studies as unethical and problematic, because they undermined the agency of the participants and inherent worth of human life. Crisol Escobedo et al. (2007), in the article 'Ethical Issues with Informed Consent', are particularly critical of the manipulative and clandestine way consent was obtained in the Willowbrook case. Escobedo et al. (2007) suggests that concerns such as language and religion as well as other circumstances must be taken seriously if these factors have the potential to contribute in any way to the vulnerability of the population group being researched. The Willowbrook Study has had a significant impact on research ethics, particularly in relation to issues of coercion and consent.

Laud Humphreys' (1975) infamous article: 'Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places', solicited intense debate relating to the violation of fundamental canons of ethical research. Glenn Goodwin et al. (1991) argue that this was due primarily to the clandestine way the research was conducted. Humphrey's study of homosexuals' sexual behaviour was widely considered unethical, because Humphreys immersed himself into the gay community, in venues known as "tearooms", that is public restrooms in which gay men engaged in sexual activities, without revealing his researcher role. Goodwin et al. (1991) in their 'Laud Humphreys: a pioneer in the practice of social science', revisited the debates around this study and noted that in the light of the clandestine nature of his research, coupled with his engaging in deviant and criminal behaviour and using police information to track down participants during his fieldwork, Humphreys violated the very fundamental canons of ethical research (Goodwin et al.1991:142). Humphreys himself asserts that 'from the beginning, my decision was to continue the practice of field study [while] passing as deviant' (Humphreys, 1975:25). He furthermore, through participant observation, recorded the licence plates of the cars of the men under observation, then used his contacts in the police services to track down these men with whom he conducted interviews under the guise of completing a 'social health survey' (Humphreys, 1975:14). The contestation over the ethics in Laud Humphreys' research brought to the fore the need for closer scrutiny of research projects by Institutional Research Committees, particularly relating to the principles of informed consent and beneficence.

Irving Horowitz, in his chapter in '*Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader'* (2007), reminds us that as recently as the 1970s, the collusion between the US military and academic social scientists, in 'Project Camelot', played a significant role in the establishment of ethics in anthropology as it brought to the fore the potential harm to research participants in the social sciences field. With the changing face of warfare and with nuclear weaponry posing a threat to the United States of America, 'Project Camelot', which was funded by the United States military, unethically utilised the skills and knowledge of social scientists who, according to Horowitz, were tasked to 'measure and forecast the causes of revolutions and insurgency in under developed areas of world… and finding ways of eliminating the causes, or coping with the revolutions and insurgencies' (2007:278).

The debates highlighted in Horowitz's 'Life and Death of Project Camelot' illustrate the need to critically scrutinize the ethics of the relationship between academic researchers, industry, and the state. Compared to the other cases presented above, all focussed on unethical

conduct in bio-medical research, Project Camelot had a significant impact on anthropological research as it focused on social science research.

The issues discussed above and the extent to which it influenced research ethics demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between the researcher and the research participant, and it also highlights the need for greater regulation and oversight of both procedural ethics and ethics in practice. As a result of these and other contestations over what constitutes ethical research, the following international normative frameworks for conducting research in the medical sciences as well as the social sciences are presently delineated: The Nuremberg Code (1949), The Helsinki Declaration (1964) and The Belmont Report (1978). These, although not exhaustive, provide a set of accepted standards for conducting research. Universities and research institutions are today accountable as a result of being subjected to clear ethical guidelines that are derived from these universal 'codes of ethics' in research, which have become consolidated and entrenched to such an extent that not many funded and institution-based research, if any, can be conducted without formal clearance ensuring compliance with the norms and standards established by these frameworks.

It is also important to note that while academic and research institutions' ethical processes are influenced largely by developments within the bio-medical field, these are not always suited to the needs – and thus invariably pose challenges for – social scientists. For this reason, continuous efforts are made to address ethical issues within the social sciences, and there are ongoing discussions of ethics prevailing among social scientists. It is against this backdrop that I wish to turn to Marilyn Guillemin and Lynn Gillam in their 2004 article, 'Ethics, Reflexivity and Ethically Important Moments in Research' where they argue that ethics in research is reducible to two dimensions: procedural ethics, which refers to institutional requirements that need to be met by all researchers as a pre-condition for conducting research; and ethics in practice, which refers to the situation where the researcher is in direct contact with the research participant. This distinction, which is derived from key debates and contestations occurring over the last 100 years, relates to the ethical relations of power that exist between the researcher and researched. Lori Alvino, in her article 'Who's Watching the Watchdogs? Responding to the Erosion of research Ethics by Enforcing Promises', noted that 'the history of research involving human subjects has been described by ethicists as one of 'progress propelled by scandal' (Alvino 2003: 895).

Potential risks, possible exposure and harm to the research participant emphasise the importance of ethics in the research process. Ethical guidelines emerged as a result of researchers causing intentional and at times unintentional harm to research participants. To contain potential harm with specific focus on anthropological research, The American Anthropological Association for instance has created dedicated forums to facilitate discussions on ethical issues relating to anthropological research and it produced an ethics-focused publication edited by Joan Cassell and Sue-Ellen Jacobs (1987). Contributors to the publication paid attention to inter alia: the tension between ethics in practice and procedural ethics; how research ethics is taught (ethics in the classroom); and ethical dilemmas encountered in the field. Similarly, contributors to the *Journal of American Ethnological Society* (2006) extensively discussed the challenges anthropologists face engaging with institutional review boards. The editor of this journal argues that issues raised by institutional review boards are not only intellectual, but also practical, ethical, institutional and political and that compliance should transcend the confines of bio-medical research protocols but rather an engagement spanning from conceptualisation to publication (2006:475). *Anthropology Southern Africa,* the Anthropology Journal of Southern Africa (2005) also recommended guidelines for conducting research based on ethical challenges and contributing scholars vowed to continuously review the guidelines to promote good practice and ethical research in Southern Africa. Later in this thesis I draw on specific cases, which I perceive to be relevant to my research, for insight into the ethical challenges and pitfalls I encountered during my research. Historically, the often blatant and at times covert violation of the right to protection, autonomy and self-determination of research participants has led not only to bio-medical research being subjected to scrutiny in terms of ethical codes or guidelines but to the extension of the same to social science researchers. Whilst the application of these ethical codes and guidelines has been restricted to select vulnerable groups, I seek to explore migrants as potential vulnerable participants within the research setting. As this research is ethnographic in nature, I wish to spend a moment exploring ethics within ethnography.

2.1.2 Ethnography and Ethics

All researchers are subject to ethical guidelines or codes determined by the respective institutional review boards of the institutions to which they are affiliated. The nature of ethnographic research lends itself to a certain tradition, insofar as it relates to the relationship

between the researcher and research participants. There is an undisputed power dynamic between a researcher and the subject of the research. In 'The Ethics of Ethnography', Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwall (2001) advance that there are four ethical principles derived from ethical codes that ethnographic researchers should regard as their most important: (1) Non-maleficence – requires researchers to ensure that no harm befalls research participants as a result of the research project; (2) Beneficence requires that the research participant should benefit from the research (this should not be understood to mean that a participant must benefit materially from the research); (3) Autonomy implies that the research participant has the authority to reasonably determine the terms on which they participate in the study, which terms need to be respected by the researcher; and (4) Justice: requires all research participants to be treated as equals and respected by the researcher (2001:339). Researchers that endeavour to fulfil these principles are confronted by a range of ethical challenges. Pat Caplan (2003) puts forward several approaches to assist researchers to implement sound, ethical research practices. Caplan (2003) who presents a critical discussion of the relationship between ethics and anthropology, concludes her introduction with four main observations about power and ethics in ethnographic research, namely: (a) that ethical considerations should permeate all aspects of a discipline; (b) that all ethics are ultimately political; (c) she highlights the centrality of reflexivity; and (d) finally points to the need for rigorous critique of self and the discipline. Caplan further asserts that 'when we discuss ethics as anthropologists we discuss all aspects of the discipline: its epistemology, its fieldwork practice and its institutional and wider social context' (2003:27). Bahira Sherif in her article 'The Ambiguities of Boundaries in fieldwork Experience', argues that ethnographic research has always been critiqued by those coming from a more positivist persuasion for its lack of 'non-duplicable results' (2001:437). While the validity and limitations of knowledge production continue to be key consideration, within ethnographic research, Sherif insists that the 'emphasis on reflexivity, power relations and the establishment of rapport in the field' has become central to this debate (2001:437). Reflexivity equips the researcher with the necessary tools to address issue of power from the conceptualisation of the research to the publication of research findings. The shifting nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched renders a discussion around the extent to which the researcher is accepted or rejected by the research participants. This is an important consideration insofar as it relates researcher's legitimacy in the eyes of the research participants which, invariably impacts on the quality/integrity of the data collected.

In the next section I explore the relationship between researcher and research participant(s), drawing on dilemmas identified by scholars within their research practice – in particular as concerns the "insider/outsider dichotomy". In her consideration of the self and other in anthropology, Meira Weiss in 'Others within Us: Collective Identity, Positioning and Displacement', asserts that a definition of 'self is always contingent on the conceptualization of the other' (2007:187), a characterization which brings to the fore the binary position of the insider-outsider status. Sherif (2001) echoes this sentiment when she notes that although her Egyptian heritage and family relations facilitated access to her study population, the cultural and religious dissonances between this heritage and family on the one hand and her academic objectives on the other caused serious tension between herself and the study population. Gayle Pitman (2002), similarly, in her 'Outsider/Insider: The Politics of Shifting Identities in the Research Process', discusses several ethical challenges related to her position as both an insider (lesbian) and an outsider (white female) during researching body image among lesbians of colour. She notes that during her research she mistakenly 'outed' – that is publicly revealed the sexual orientation/identity of – one of her black female lesbian research participants, on the assumption that they shared a connection as lesbians (2002:286). The above scholars (Sherif 2001; Pitman 2002 and Weiss 2007) all highlight some of the challenges and pitfalls in research when power and positionality between the researcher and the research participant is left un- or under-interrogated.

The relation between research participant and researcher is not only crucial to the research project, but also to the very context within which the research takes place. Jacobs-Huey in her analysis of the 'native anthropologist', recognising her own position within the research setting, offers useful insights into research ethics in anthropology: she advances that a researcher's indigenous background or other similarities with the researched does not 'authorise carte blanche status in the field' (2002:793). By this she means while a researcher possessing the same or similar biological or biographical factor as a research participant imbues a researcher with a heightened sensibility regarding this factor, the researcher should not assume that on this basis they have an indisputable insight into that person or the social group to which they belong. Hence, she advocates that 'all scholars, particularly native ones, must diligently strive to negotiate legitimacy in the field' (Jacobs-Huey, 2002:793).

The position advanced by Jacobs-Huey (2002) and Collins (1991) appears to suggest that a black female researcher and black female research participant potentially have a closer relation insofar as certain nuances and practices in the context of race, class, gender,

ethnicity, and sexual orientation are concerned. However, as Collins points out, negotiating legitimacy between the researcher and the research participant based on the 'interlocking nature of oppression' (1991:41) could aid or obstruct the outcome of a research project and thus requires a high level of vigilance as well as the adoption of a reflective approach within the fieldwork setting. Jacobs-Huey and Collins caution researchers to be more aware of assumed similarities between the researcher and the research participants as leverage to engage at an equal level. In the light of this caution I wish to turn to the notion of the research location. The research location invariably impacts not only on the study but also on the researcher's relationship with the research participants.

Anthropological research has traditionally been concerned with studying cultural phenomena in faraway places; thus, traditionally, ethical challenges have been preoccupied with addressing the dynamic of a foreign researcher engaging in observation far away from their own place of origin. In more recent times, however, more and more research is conducted 'at home' - in other words, in the researcher's own environment, culture and or community. Some scholars have expressed their anxieties that 'insider research' produces a wholly different set of ethical challenges. Justine Mercer in 'The Challenges of Insider Research in Educational Institutions' argues that 'pragmatism may outweigh candor' (2007: 8), while Patton in *Qualitative Research and Evaluations Methods* suggests that researchers engage in a kind of 'empathic neutrality' to navigate the space between empathy on the one hand, and objectivity on the other (2002:50).

The dimension of studying 'the other' at home – as opposed to the proverbial anthropological research in faraway places - currently begs the researcher to cultivate a greater awareness of their own position within the research setting. Jacobs-Huey notes that researchers are increasingly expected to account for their own positionalities (2002:792). Reflecting on the research ethics pertinent for researching the migrant 'other' in the South African context, Joy Owen, in a co-authored article 'Fieldwork in shared spaces: Positionality, power and ethics of citizen anthropologists in Southern Africa' discusses the dynamics of her decision to gaze upon 'the other' at home and how her position as a native South African studying the 'non-native refugee in her home space renders her position in the field as a rather powerful one' (2005:125). Owen's position as a woman shifted the power dynamic between the researcher and the researched and, if only for a moment, also exposed her own vulnerability as a woman when she was exploring migrant-refugees' experiences of police stations.

Such relations of power, characterised by the constant negotiation and renegotiation between researcher and researched, which is evident in Owens's accounts, is aptly underscored by Diane L. Wolf in *Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, where she asserts that despite reflexivity about the researcher's position and apparent similarities with the researched, 'inequality may still persist between the researcher and her subjects… because the fieldworker has the ability and privilege to leave the field location' (1996:10) whereas in most cases subjects' ability to do so is generally more circumscribed than the fieldworker's.

Carol Hanisch (1969), in her discussion paper entitled 'The Personal is Political' understood the political 'in the broad sense of the word as having to do with power relationships, not the narrow sense of electoral politics' (Carol Hanisch 2006:1). This is an idea that would later be endorsed by other scholars, including Caplan who argued that it is 'difficult to divorce ethics from politics' (Caplan 2003:27). I can also attest that my experience in the research field resonated with Caplan's observation that ethics within the research field is a 'series of processes in which power is heavily implicated' (2003:27).

Diane Wolf (1996), in *Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, suggests that 'power is discernable in three interrelated dimensions: (1) power differences stemming from the different positionalities of the researcher and the researched (positionality in terms of the race, class, nationality, life changes, urban-rural backgrounds, etc. of the researcher or researched); (2) power exerted during the research process (the research provides clear and understandable information to the research participant pertaining intended research to which the research participant determine participation or not); and (3) power exerted during the post-fieldwork period' (feminists argue for co-authorship as an acknowledgement to the production of knowledge on the part of the research participant) (1996:2).

Guillemin and Gillam, taking cognisance of the ethical dilemmas inherent in research, propose in 'Ethics, Reflexivity and 'Ethically important moments' in research' that to respond to these challenges we must turn our attention to 'what constitutes ethical research practice in qualitative research and how researchers achieve ethical research practice' (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:262). They go on to distinguish between what they consider the two dimensions of ethics, namely procedural ethics and ethics in practice; and they advocate for researchers to maintain critical reflexivity as they adhere to both ethical domains, which they advance requires upholding the basic principles of doing no harm, protecting the

welfare and rights of research participants, gaining informed consent from research participants and promoting autonomy and justice within the field (Guillemin & Gillam 2004).

Drawing on this literature to reflect on my own fieldwork experience, I noted that despite my site, the hair salon, being essentially a recreational space quite distinct from Owen's site of the police station (2005), which was a highly-charged environment for the migrants/ refugees accessing either site, the police station or salon, were characterised by a power dynamic between the researcher and the research participants, even if the form differed across contexts. Thus, Owen acknowledged that she, like the police, had to some extent power over the research participants. In the case of the hair salon, power resided in the salon owner, who mediated my terms of access as the researcher; however, once access to the site was conferred, most of the subsequent power (e.g. how, when, with whom interviews were conducted and analysed, etc.) was exerted by the researcher. However, it is important to note that power relations within the research setting are not static and that relative power positions can shift between researcher and the researched during the research process.

For Guillemin and Gillam (2004), relations of power and reflexivity between researcher and research participant are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated as both actors mediate their co-dependence in the research field. In terms of negotiating my access to the field, the salon owner had the final authority and discretion to decide whether I, as the researcher, could access his or her space. Similarly, while there was recognition that I had identified this research site in my capacity as a researcher and that it thus was a relevant and important space, I could also exercise my discretion at any point and opt to withdraw or retreat to the relative comfort of my home and community. It is thus my contention that the power held by researchers manifests and is reflected at various levels. Guillemin and Gillam offer reflexivity as a useful measure not only to strengthen the rigour, validity and reliability of qualitative research, but also as a measure to take into account ethical considerations in the qualitative research process.

As this study focuses on a migrant population it is thus imperative to contextualise the motivation for migration and I will thus turn to Nina Glick Schiller et al. who asserts that, '[a] new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies' (1999:26). In the light of this 'simultaneous embeddedness', I investigated the culturally-informed economic practices among African female migrants who have settled in a particular neighbourhood of Cape

Town. Roger Rouse in *Mexican Migration and the social space of Postmodernism in Migration, Diaspora and Transnationalism* highlights the redundancy of neatly demarcated nation states and national identities when he notes that:

> 'we live in a confusing world, a world of crisscrossed economies, intersecting systems of meaning, and fragmented identities. Suddenly, the comforting modern imagery of the nation states and national languages of coherent communities and consistent subjectivities, of dominant centres and distant margins no longer seems adequate (1999:138).

At a macro level this rings true; but at a micro level, immersion in the 'dominant' context leaves those on the margins vulnerable by virtue of either creating a parallel existence or assimilation by association or on account of being the 'Other'. Abdoumaliq Simone (2000), in *Going South: African immigrants in Johannesburg,* offers a critical review of the conditions under which African migrants live in Johannesburg. He observes that 'as the disenfranchised had limited space and opportunity to actualise their own development visions and agendas, to institutionalise a working sense of who they were to themselves and the larger world they now must confront a diminution of the salience of national and cultural identity as it faces the prospect of being continuously remade' (2000:427) Migrants thus find themselves at times in conflicting existence with elements of assimilation and attempts to retain a level of authenticity relating to their home.

In an article by Agergeaard (2016), the scholar argues that women are particularly vulnerable to the forces of migration, insofar as women are not imagined as independently mobile, and are instead too frequently imagined as being attached to family upon whom they are financially dependent. According to Kok et al. (2006) in *Migration in South and Southern Africa,* the end of apartheid and the advent of democracy in South Africa had a significant impact on the prevalence and patterns of migration to South Africa from the rest of the continent. The reasons postulated for the significant increase in the number of African immigrants to South Africa vary. However, Simone (2000) delineates four categories of immigrants, distinguished on the basis of categories of movement according to a 'rough delineation of some working typology – not intended with any substantial conceptual precision', namely: political refugees (self-explanatory); economic opportunists (those seeking better livelihood prospects); brain drain (those exploiting their intellectual capital – ostensibly expatriate rather than migrant); and affiliates (family members, partners, children

etc.). Simone further suggests that often migrants straddle two or more categories: thus, for example, a political refugee may find unintended economic opportunities that enhance his or her mobility once they have been provided political asylum (2000:429-431).

There is widespread recognition that migration affects both countries of origin and host countries; however, research focuses primarily on unilateral population patterns (Card 2007; Cangiano 2014) and economics (Kerr and Kerr 2011; Freidberg and Hunt 1995). Leading scholars on migration (Facchini, Mayda and Mendola 2011; Crush 2000) assert that the influx of African immigrants into South Africa has had a visible impact on both the host culture(s) as well as on the migrant community. Some of this influence is negative, however, as has been reflected upon by Nieftagodien Noor (2008) and other scholars and activists in the edited volume *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Reinvention of Difference in South Africa*, migrants remain vulnerable to exploitation, exclusion and xenophobia. This social, economic and political vulnerability of the migrants further places them at risk of being excluded simply based on their difference from, or being deemed 'Other-ed' (Rattansi 1999) in relation to the local population, especially if they are perceived to be reluctant to integrate, or resist assimilation into the dominant culture (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh and Singh 2005). It is against this backdrop of intricate complexities of migration that one needs to consider the role of the researcher studying a research population such as a migrant group, in particular one that is composed of women.

Lisa Pfeifer et al. in *Gender in Economic Research on International Migration and Its Impacts: A Critical Review* assert that the gender composition of world migration reflects a complex interplay of social, political, and economic conditions, migration histories, labour demands in destination countries, and household and community dynamics (Pfeifer et al. 2008:13). She argues that there are several variables differentiating international migration for men and women. She also notes that a 'cost-benefit analysis is at the heart of any migration decision model, either explicitly or implicitly. Migration can be conceived as an outcome of individual or household decisions - or both. It can encompass a wide variety of benefits, costs, and risks, including ones that are not traditionally thought of as being 'economic' and it can be shaped by individual, household, or community characteristics, some of which can be observed and others not' (Pfeifer 2008: 15).

In closing, this literature review highlights three key elements relevant to this research project. Firstly, over the past seven decades, ethics have emerged as a central consideration within research to ensure the protection of research participants and to provide guidelines to researchers who conduct research that involves human beings. Secondly, ethical considerations in ethnographic study give rise to a unique set of challenges. These include dimensions of power between a researcher and the subject of research; the positionality of either party on account of peculiar personal, social or economic factors; ethics relating to research procedure; and ethical consideration pertaining to research practice. Gendered ethnographies have also opened new possibilities for research: reflexivity, in other words is advanced as a central component of the research process. A particularly salient point, since this research project is concerned with migrant women, is that the literature review demonstrates the narrow and limited way in which women's migrant identities have been imagined.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: Women's Transnational Migration: A Feminist and Postcolonial Optic

3.1 Introduction

In this section I will present a feminist and postcolonial lens through which I will view women's migration. I will explore more specifically migrant women and work as much of the scholarship on migrant women and work has traditionally been considered in a feminised context. I will furthermore discuss the impetus around women's migration in relation to men.

I have drawn on a range of theoretical canons to understand and analyse the lived experiences of migrant women in South Africa. In this chapter I articulate why I propose specific theoretical positions as the foundation for this study. Firstly, I will draw on Feminism for its privileging of positionality and reflexivity in the context of research. Secondly, I will utilise Postcolonialism as an optic through which to consider the issues that focus on power and identity, to not only understand migrant women's lived experiences, but also to identify the various ways power and identities are negotiated in the migrant context.

Of course, the issues of positionality, reflexivity, power and identity are not as easily demarcated as the above division suggests and as such I will explore Feminist standpoint theory broadly and Black Feminist standpoint theory in particular, as a way to examine the intersection of the four 'issues'. It is my view that this approach to my research and analysis of African women's migration into South Africa and the ways that they generate and maintain socio-economic mobility through their labour practices in hairstyling salons, will help me to assess and understand their narratives of power and identity, not only in the relationship between research-researched, but also between African woman labour migrants and society at large.

3.2 Intersectional Approaches

Early standpoint theory was framed within a Marxist critique of class domination. Nancy Hartsock (1983) contextualised the significance of this critique as an epistemological tool to understand all forms of oppression and inequality; she proposes standpoint theory as a legitimate lens through which to gain insight into the life of women as a marginalised and oppressed social category.

Rolin notes that power relations can distort or suppress evidence in two ways (2009:220). Firstly, in the research relationship evidence can be suppressed as a result of intimidation or it may evoke feelings of discomfort on the part of the research participant. Secondly, power dynamics can undermine the relationship of trust between the researcher and the research participant, with the result that the research participant may become excessively inhibited or engage in self-censorship or falsehoods in an effort to avoid being negatively regarded by the researcher. Feminist standpoint theory provides an environment of self-actualisation in which the research participants can facilitate their own agency (Collins 1990; Rolin 2009). Standpoint theory is used in research projects that are concerned with race, class, gender, sexuality and post-colonial research (Harding 2009; Wylie 2003; Fonow and Cook 1991).

Standpoint theory is concerned with what Sandra Harding (2009) describes as 'the relation between the production of knowledge and practices of power'. In other words, it provides a framework through which a researcher can consider the extent to which power relations influence the production of knowledge. Harding further asserts that standpoint projects 'have consistently redefined epistemic standards for more accurate, comprehensive, objective, and rational production of knowledge' (2009:195). It is within this context that one can infer that standpoint theory serves as a resource to interpret the social conditions under which knowledge is produced and that it provides a framework by which to understand and interpret the meaning of such knowledge. Kristina Rolin (2009) states that there are two conditions under which standpoint theory can be used as a methodology for the study of power relations. The first is to 'reflect on the relations of power as a distinctive kind of obstacle to the production of scientific knowledge', and the second is to couple the process of generating evidence with a process of empowerment' (2009:219). Standpoint theory provides a context within which the researcher actively self-reflects on his or her position of power relative to the subject of research to reduce the risk of possible harm to the research participant during scientific knowledge production.

Traditional androcentric approaches to knowledge production, in other words the male dominance in scholarship, gave rise to the emergence of standpoint theory, which forms part of Feminist Critical Theory; and, despite being a contested theoretical perspective, standpoint theory has been embraced by feminists as a legitimate point of departure through which to privilege women's lived experiences. Standpoint theorists challenge positions of power, proposing that researchers adopt a reflexive approach to more effectively take cognisance of their position and role within the research context relative to that of research participants.

They also emphasise the positionality of the research parties, with critical reflection by the researcher required to promote ethical and participatory research.

My focus on intersectional positions such as race and gender as areas of study is profoundly influenced by Patricia Collins as a leading scholar in Black Feminist standpoint theory. As a black female researcher conducting research with black female migrant workers, I wished to depart from the premise, as asserted by Patricia Collins in her discussion on black women's lived realities and lived experiences, that notwithstanding the fact that there is no monolithic black women's culture, there are social constructs that capture the social relationships within which black women exist and which inform black women's cultural identity (1991:44). She further notes that social constructs such as race and gender allow for categories of analysis to which black women are privy by their lived experiences and legacy of struggle. (1990:22). Collins acknowledges the differences in expression of culture and identity and that there is no monolithic black female culture. She however notes that the lived realities and lived experiences of black women as a category in the context of social constructs such as race and gender are some of the elements that might facilitate a relationship between the various actors by virtue of these live realities and experiences (1990:28). This perspective provides an environment for self-actualisation as research participants are less likely to interpret the research process as a threat to their personal lives.

In establishing a close relationship or rapport with the research participant, an ethnographic approach is deemed useful as it allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the everyday life of the research participants by immersing him or herself in the world of the study population. Here I wish to turn to Brenda Skeggs' work on Feminist Ethnography, in which she asserts that there is a close link between ethnography and feminism because both traditions have 'experience, participants, definitions and sometimes subjectivity as a focus and they do not lose sight of context' (2001:426). I am particularly interested in her proposition that feminist ethnography's relation to the discipline of anthropology was significantly framed by colonialism as it is concerned with power and power relations. She contends that colonialism in its most simplistic form was marked by policies and practices of repression and inequality; however, she also recognises that anthropology as a discipline has long since discarded this negative association, which Skeggs calls a 'repositioning of ethnography from a colonial method to a liberatory strategy' (2001:430).

Power relations between researcher and research participant form a central aspect of ethnographic research. Skeggs notes that feminist ethnography is no longer confined to the ethnographies of women; instead feminist ethnography has become a practice that is now informed by Feminist Theory to expose the traditional trajectories of power and representation that colours ethnographic work. Research relations in ethnographic research also demonstrate this dimension. As they continuously shift, power relations are negotiated throughout the research process.

One of the key elements that influences the power relation between the researcher and the research participant is positionality – a notion that refers to the researcher's or the research participant's social standing in terms of race, class and gender and, or access to resources. April L. Few et al. (2003) argues that, for the researcher, being of similar race and gender does not guarantee insider-status; however, as a result of the researcher's positionality, insider status can be continuously negotiated. They further note that a researcher and research participant from the same or a similar racial group and/or gender category are often confronted with barriers such as 'class, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality' (2003:207). It is these barriers, which at times make it even more difficult to negotiate insider-status. Similarly, Skeggs (2001) suggests that when we conduct ethnographic research, all researchers come with their own cultural and economic baggage, which is something we cannot divorce ourselves from. Recognising our own position of privilege and power compels us as researchers to exercise vigilance not only in the field, but also with respect to questions such as how to handle or interpret data, or how to interpret or assign meaning during data analysis.

Few et al. note that researchers should be cognisant of 'personal appearance, body movement, language as a social status maker '(2003:211) because this can potentially either 'drive a wedge or cement the informant-researcher relationship' (2003:211). Fonow and Cook describe reflexivity as a tool used by feminists to 'reflect upon, critically examine and analytically explore the nature of the research process' (1991:2). According to M. Carolan in 'Reflexivity: A personal journey during data collection' (2003), reflexivity offers the researcher measurements with which to strive to produce better quality research, as it enables researchers to consider their own position in relation to that of the research participants. She states, further, that in addition to the need to know the researcher's position, the researcher's interests also have an impact on all the stages of the research project. Nina Hoel (2013), a white female scholar of Islamic Studies, similarly, in 'Embodying the Field: A Researcher's

reflections on Power Dynamics, Positionality and the Nature of Research Relationship', reflects on the tensions she experienced as a researcher in her encounters with Muslim women. In her analysis of what she describes as 'embodying the impaired body' in the intertwined nature of researcher-researched relationship she almost becomes the custodian of the narratives of domestic violence and other abuses articulated by the research participants. Hoel (2013) becomes a confidant to these women, which, coupled with their affording her the position of custodian of their life narratives, demonstrates the critical need for reflexivity to avert any potential abuse of the power differential between the research parties. It is for this reason that reflexivity is proffered as one of the central underpinnings of ethnographic research.

3.3 Feminist Theory and Transnationalism

Until about 30 years ago, in the field of migration studies – as in ethnography – issues of women and gender were almost invisible in mainstream academic scholarship until feminist scholars started to prioritise the documentation of women's experiences in international migration (Mahler and Pessar 2003; Silvey 2004). Scholars (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000; Carling 2005; Agrawal 2006), have argued that this omission of women from migration studies was largely attributable to an androcentric bias, and the entrenched assumption that when women moved they did so as followers or dependants, hence they did not merit independent study; this even though women have migrated to the same extent and largely in the same numbers as their male counterparts (DeLaet 1999). Alongside the development of more general feminist theory, in the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars interested in migration started to introduce very basic forms of gender analyses into migration studies (Hondagneu- Sotelo 2000). By making migrant women visible in migration studies (Morokvasic 1983, 1984), and developing studies that focused exclusively on women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000), among other things, researchers demonstrated that women did not merely migrate as dependants and followers, but also at their own volition undergoing experiences that differed significantly from those of male migrants (Carling 2005). However, most of this scholarship did not offer any significant theories of gender relations, with the result that it had little effect on mainstream migration theory (Carling 2003).

Later, when theories of intersectionality and gender relations entered feminist scholarship, the focus of this research shifted towards interrogating 'the gendering of migration patterns and on the way migration reconfigures systems of gender inequality' (Hondagneu-Sotelo

2000:115). For example, some studies looked at how migration can affect and change gender relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003), while other studies considered the different ways in which male migrants to the United States eventually aimed for return-migration to their places of origin, while women migrants often preferred to settle permanently (Pessar 1986; Goldring 1996). The limitation of this kind of research was its primary focus on familial and intra-household gender relations, implicitly framing gender relations as a concern only for the domestic arena (Hondagneu- Sotelo 2003).

Patricia P. Pessar and Sarah J. Mahler are among the key contributors to current theorisations about gender in migration. They present an understanding of gender as both a social construct and a constitutive element of migration, and they argue for the importance of research paying attention to 'how gender relations are negotiated across national borders among migrant women and men and how gender articulates transnationally with other modes of identity' (Pessar and Mahler 2003:815). This kind of scholarship is significantly shaped and influenced by critical third world feminists such as Chandra Mohanty (1988) and Ayesha Imam (1997), who argue that gender must be interrogated based on its intersection with other axes of differentiation. Pessar and Mahler argue that it is precisely differentiation configured around race, gender, class and sexuality that informs a person's ability to move or to imagine their migration (2003:823).

What most scholars do agree on, however, is that women who are the subjects of migrant research 'find their bodies subject to a more oppressive disciplinary framework, their skills further devalorised, and their spaces even more circumscribed' (Pratt and Yeoh 2003: 162). Thus, the gender focus of my study, as in many others, has been to debunk the optimistic assumption that migration is essentially an instrument for empowerment and liberation for migrants (Pratt and Yeoh 2003). In addition, another area where feminist research on women migrants has made an important contribution to migration studies is its refusal to treat women as passive objects and its recognition and analysis of the agency of women migrants (Silvey 2004).

A focus on women migrants has also made it possible for researchers to interrogate the gendered nature of citizenship and national-state policies as they relate to migration. Joseph Carens, for example, sought to expose the ways in which migrant women are seldom offered the same citizenship status as men, and argued that women 'are recognised and addressed as citizens in the context of their positions within patriarchal structures, as subordinate mothers,

wives, children or siblings' (1996:7). While important strides have been made towards incorporating gender analysis into migration research, most studies that take gender seriously focus almost exclusively on women's lives and experiences and their agency is not sufficiently addressed.

3.3.1 Migrant women, work and gender relations

Because of an increasing amount of scholarly attention paid to women's labour migration in the last decade, there have been increasingly complex and diverse optics through which women's migration has come to be understood. Raghuram laments that much of this research 'ascribe[s] women's mobility to their participation in feminised roles. Feminised gender roles therefore appear to be an important part of women's migratory experience, but also an essential lens through which women's migration is understood by researchers' (2008:43).

It would thus be reasonable to conclude that due to conventional immigration policies that are built on traditional notions of family structures, women's skills, when they enter as family migrants, are often not recognised (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). As early as 1983, Phizacklea observed that there was a significant increase in the number of women migrating for purposes of work. Overall, this migration entailed work in highly feminised and traditionally female occupations such as domestic work (Anderson 2000), the social care sector (McGregor 2007) and sex work (Bales 2003; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Agustin 2006). Recent research indicates that women also experience feminisation as they migrate; thus, skilled women migrants become deskilled in that it is disproportionately domestic rather than professional roles that are available to them in destination countries (Salaff and Greve 2003; Man 2004). Thus, the feminised representations of women migrants persist in scholarship and research. In this research project, I consciously sought to place emphasis on the examination of women's labour migration and the making of identity in the context of African migration.

Notwithstanding the fact that historically, skilled women labour migrants have largely been under-examined, there are a number of recent studies concerned with migration among women nurses. However, much of the debates and discussion revolve around push and pull factors in migration – with specific emphasis on conflict and economic instability in mostly developing countries – as key motivations for migration, as opposed to the economic opportunities skilled women, in particular nurses, pursue in developed countries (Aiken et al. 2003; McIlwaine et.al 2006; Ray et al. 2006; George 2005). In addition, it has been shown that, within the care sector, gender, race and class positions intersect and cause many

migrants to experience devaluation of their skills in receiving countries (McGregor 2007). For example, Mcllwaine, Datta, Evans, Herbert, May and Wills (2006) have illustrated how Black African migrant men in London experience devaluation of their skills, and are over-concentrated in 'feminised' cleaning and care sectors of that local labour market.

Despite the abovementioned studies, Raghuram (2008) has argued that skilled women labour migrants remain under-researched in migration studies, and that women in male-dominated sectors and arenas have been neglected altogether. Raghuram advocates for more critical studies concerned with women migrants in male-dominated labour sectors, suggesting that such an intersection is likely to expose 'more permutations of class and ethnic barriers than might be accessible through a study of female-dominated sectors' (Raghuram 2008:52).

3.3.2 Gender and Migration

Although still not fully 'mainstreamed', gender has increasingly become a concern within transnational migration research and research has started to examine how gender and other social characteristics such as race and class interact to influence all stages of the migration process (Mahler and Pessar 2003). Migration processes include pre-migration strategies and opportunities, the process of migration, and post- migration situations and experiences. A wide range of scholars have concluded that gender relations, roles and discourses have an impact on a migrant's aspirations and decisions to migrate (Hugo 1995; Carling 2002; Mahler 1999; Wiltshire 1992), their ability to produce mobility and to migrate (Kofman,1999) and on their actual experience of migration when it ultimately takes place (Chell 1997; Lazaridis 2000).

More recently, however, migration scholars, including those in South Africa, have turned their attention to examining the nature and consequences of the monetary remittances that migrants send 'home'. While it is trite that the sending of remittances is not a new phenomenon, the scale of contemporary remittances has provided insight into the extent to which migrants' non-industrialised home countries now increasingly depend on this source of funds, (Itzigsohn 2000; Portes 2003) with some countries' primary source of foreign currency being migrant remittances (Hussain 2005). Some scholars have paid particular attention to South- North migration, examining the 'developmental' effects of the migrants' remittances (Carling 2004; de Haas 2008); while others have focussed on the 'cosmopolitan transnationalist' identity of many cities across the world, brought about by the varied and extensive influences of the migrant populations within the cities concerned (Schiller Glick and Caglar 2011). Yeoh and Chang (2001) have highlighted, for example, that migrants' class

positions determine how they are incorporated into the transnational life of Singapore. They suggest that the lives of the transnational business class, low- and semi- skilled immigrant workers, cultural and artistic specialists and international tourists are structurally and experientially different, yet highly interdependent (Yeoh and Chang 2001).

Researchers have also shown that migrants' ability and motivations regarding transnational migration differ according to race and class positions (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). While middle-class and professional migrants frequently have the material resources to assimilate 'here and there' (Levitt 2007; Raj 2003), many ordinary migrants whether students, refugees or otherwise displaced, are at times forced to negotiate conflicting socio-economic and social positions (Levitt and Glick- Schiller 2004; Smith 2006). However, as I have sought to argue earlier, migration studies are littered with studies that insist that migration has a liberating effect on women, especially when women become breadwinners and can assert their agency within the household (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Other scholars (Alumkal 1999; Caglar 1995; Espiritu 1992), however, argue that migration may also function to reproduce and reinforce patriarchal power hierarchies, possibly due to men's loss of status in the host country, or because of their attempts to conserve an ethnic and cultural identity from 'home' after relocation (Agrawal 2006). This may happen simultaneously, creating a situation in which women negotiate complex, and sometimes contradictory, private and public messages (DeBiaggi 2002; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Salih, 2003).

It is thus within the context of these prevailing debates that I wish to consider the ways in which African women migrants produce migrant mobility and economic visibility, and how this related to research ethics and power relations in this study. The study is informed by a critical engagement with the literature, feminist scholarship, ethnographic voices and prevailing debates in South Africa around gender and migration, as discussed above.

3.4 Postcolonialism and Identity-Making

Postcolonial theory offers the tools necessary to examine how the identities and realities of dominant powers and the 'subaltern' are mutually constitutive. As such, Rattansi critiques globalisation and modernisation perspectives for neglecting to consider how colonial projects played a considerable role in European modernization, both in terms of economic development and identity making processes. Postcolonial theory promotes a conceptualization of mutuality rather than oppositional binaries. Rattansi explains that by constructing 'the natives as black, pagan, irrational, uncivilized, pre-modern, libidinous,

licentious, effeminate and childlike' colonial powers enabled a 'self-conception of the European as superior, and as not only fit to govern but as having the positive duty to govern and civilize' (Rattansi 1997:482). Here the argument is that notions of European/Western society and identity as modern and civilised are dependent on a binarily constructed 'Other'. Referring to sports labour migration research, Carter presents a similar argument and suggests that the analyses of migration needs to engage critically with categorizations of 'non-(Western) European peoples as somehow lacking a quality that would make them 'modern', 'civilized' or, in other words, equal' (Carter 2011a:11). It is my argument that the central theme of postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is the investigation of the mutually constitutive role played by coloniser and colonized, centre and periphery, the metropolitan and the 'native', in forming, in part, the identities of both the dominant power and the subalterns involved in the imperial and colonial projects of the 'West'. I draw on the postcolonial concept of mutual imbrication to examine how identity constructions among hosts and migrants, between the researcher and researched are mutual and relational. In particular, I use postcolonial theory to explore the ways in which South African constructions of African 'Others' are related to migrants' imaginaries and representations of their own societies and cultures in the context of the hairstyling salon, as well as to interrogate how these migrant women navigate and respond to these constructions when labouring and establishing lives in South Africa.

3.4.1 Situating Postcolonial Theory

The term 'postcolonial' as a category of analysis alongside that of race, class, caste, age and gender, first emerged in the early 1990s as a descriptor for a wide array of discursive and psychological exercises which earlier went under the rubrics of 'Third World,' 'Non-Western,' and 'Minority Studies' (Sugirtharajah 2003:4). As John McLeod is at pains to point out, 'postcolonialism is not contained by the tidy categories of historical periods or dates, although it remains firmly bound up with historical experiences' (2000:5). Postcolonialism thus addresses the legacy and the impact on people that suffered under colonial rule.

In terms of its framework of analysis, this present research project, which has as its focus the representation of African women migrants' production of mobility, is situated within the contested field of postcolonial theory (cf. Gandhi 1998: viii; Loomba 2005:1-2; Young 2001:57). David Macey (2000:304) points out that the term 'postcolonial' can sometimes be misconstrued as referencing a new historical era following the demise of the European colonial project; however, he also notes that theoretically, the field of study of

postcolonialism is significantly implicated in problematizing practices about how knowledge on both the 'self' and the 'Other' is produced. In other words, it does not 'herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured' (McLeod 2000:33). Instead, it signifies a distinct methodological form of enquiry which concerns itself with the archaeological continuities and discontinuities between colonial societies and post-independence formulations of self and of society. While defining the dominant premise of postcolonial studies can become a tricky exercise, postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order.

Postcolonial theory thus seeks to analyse and explain the social and cultural legacies of those geographic territories, dominions, settlements, frontiers and the historical encounters between the colonised indigenous population and the foreign coloniser. Postcolonialism is, particularly, concerned with the unequal relationships between the colony and the colonial power, and it sets itself the project of responding to the colonialism and imperialism found in the 'continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression' (Ashcroft et al. 2002:2) and which continue to characterise social relations in Africa today. It is my belief that postcolonialism, through its privileging of the marginalised voice, coupled with its orientation towards giving expression to narratives of resistance, and of self-assertion, provides a useful lens through which to read and analyse the experiences of African female migrants in contemporary South Africa.

3.4.2 Power and Agency

At the most essential level; this project is concerned with the question about the agency of (black) women in migratory processes. Labour migration research in the region has thus far mainly focussed on analyses of macro-structural conditions and dynamics, such as push and pull factors. In this project, I propose to explore how African women labour migrants navigate enabling and constraining factors. In this regard, I have sought to analyse micro-level relations and migrant agency in the context of an African hairstyling salon.

As such, I view structure as the economic, political and ideological framework that enables and constrains the agency of human actors, inclusive of socio-economic stratification, social institutions and relationships, and discourses and representations (Ortner 2006). In this understanding, structures are regarded not only as macro-level phenomena, but as micro-level interactions between people through which power is established, expressed, resisted and reconfigured. Drawing on aspects of standpoint theory, I regard structure and agency as

coupled in a dialectic relationship, and as working dynamically together (Ortner 2006). By this understanding agency cannot be regarded as an abstract, isolated phenomenon, it 'is always part of…the making and remaking of larger social and cultural formations' (Ortner 2006:134).

While I recognise that agency as power is best conceptualised as consisting both of habits and directed actions, this research project is primarily concerned with the intentional modalities of agency. It starts from the premise that labour migrations are actively produced - they do not just happen – and as such any conception of agency must be attentive to woman migrants' actions, hopes and desires. Drawing on the body of literature cited above, I hold the view that both the production and maintenance of mobility are intentional processes, and they are actively sought after by migrants themselves. The ways in which migrants work towards becoming and remaining mobile, whether successful or not, then constitutes the core aspects of agency that this project considers.

According to Sherry Ortner (2006) the distinction between agency as directed 'projects' and agency as habit is a heuristic device, intended to illustrate how mobilities are actively pursued. In Pessar and Mahler's (2003) 'gendered geographies of power' framework, 'mindwork', the components of agency – namely planning and intentionalities – are argued to be of crucial importance in migratory processes. Pessar and Mahler (2003:817) assert that 'much of what people actually do transnationally is foregrounded by imaging, planning and strategizing'; thus, they compel us to adjust our understanding of agency to include social imaginaries. This underscores the role of fears, hopes and desires as constituent parts of agency, which in the context of doing research among African women labour migrants play a significant role in decision-making, planning and performance.

To this end, I approach the production of migration as a process in which migrants - and other social actors - have agency and self-determination. Ortner (2006) offers a useful understanding of the relationship between agency and power. She makes a conceptual distinction between 'agency as a form of power (including issues of the empowerment of the subject, the domination of others, the resistance to domination, and so forth) and agency as a form of intention and desire, as the pursuit of goals and the enactment of projects' (Ortner 2006:153). Agency as a project refers to the intentional and desired projects and plans that actors – for our purpose, the African women migrants - work towards. This is the most basic

dimension of agency. The second element, agency-as-power, situates actors within larger power relations, and as such it focuses on how actors' social location and status confers upon them certain powers, or capacities, to influence how events unfold (Ortner 2006:143-144). This is the point at which questions concerning domination and resistance enter the discussion of agency. Key here is the recognition that certain forms of domination and subordination are embedded into social structures, such as institutions and discourses. While all social actors have agency, the power to achieve intended projects - such as transnational mobility or labour - is affected by larger geometries of power.

The African women migrants whom this project focuses on are in many ways disempowered by their socio-economic locations, legacies of colonialism, and the male-dominated orientation of labour migration in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, in this context an important dimension of agency is concerned with resistance. However, practices of resistance are expressed in a wide range of ways to include both strategic self-silencing, refusal and outright rejection. Resistance, however, is not the only form of agency expressed. Consequently, a balanced conception of agency sees it 'not as a symptom for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create' (Mahmood 2001:203). Here, it is important to note that while it has been common in feminist and postcolonial research to emphasise and celebrate the agency of the oppressed (woman/subaltern), agency should not be conflated with resistance. As argued by Mahmood (2001), submission to, or collusion with, oppressive (such as patriarchal or racial) structures are also forms of agency. Reflecting on the power relations within this research project about migrant women, I accept that relations of power existed not only between the women and the patriarchal social context, but that the women research participants in this study also had to negotiate issues of power and the expression of agency in relation to me as a researcher.

In these African women's labour migration, as in other forms of desirable migration, the production of mobility relates both to agency-as-project and agency-as-power. A necessary condition to produce mobility is a social actor's intentional project to migrate. The fulfilment of this project is related to the social status and access to resources of the prospective migrant and his or her position within power geometries in different localities. The concept of power geometries makes it possible to analyse how migrants' social locations affect their production and experience of migration, while at the same time examining 'their agency as initiators, refiners and transformers of these locations' (Pessar and Mahler 2003:817). I place particular

emphasis on exploring how the intersection of racial and gendered social locations shape access to, and experiences of, mobility and labour. As axes of social differentiation and stratification, race and gender are distinct from other social locations in that they are highly visible and are thus read from and on bodies. As such, I believe that a certain level of self-representation enables analyses of race and gender, both in South African migrant contexts and in African labour migration studies which have thus far been left unexplored.

In conclusion, this chapter motivates the privileging of postcolonial theory and feminism as an optic to analyse and examine women's migration. It explored the relation between feminism and transnational migration. Feminist scholars argue that whilst basic forms of analysis relating to gender is included in migration scholarship it had very little effect on migration theory as women's agency in migration is not sufficiently addressed. Similarly, despite an increase in the number of women migrating the feminised representation of women in scholarship prevail. The section also explored the relation between gender and migration and concluded that despite the persistence in migration scholarship that migration has had a liberating effect on women it reinforces patriarchal power hierarchies. The chapter also suggests postcolonial theory as relevant as it examines identities and relations of dominant powers. As many parts of the African continent were subject to colonial rule the legacy thereof prevails. This chapter thus sought to explore how migrant women navigate the construction by South Africans as the 'other' in work and living in South Africa. In the next chapter I present my methodological decisions, strategies and practices in the study of migrant women in the hair salon.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter I present my (1) key methodological decisions, strategies and practices, (2) how I engaged and negotiated access in the field to the research participants, (3) decisions related to selecting my research site and sample, and (4) a consideration of research instruments and analytical strategies and practices. I furthermore have a special interest in this study with regards to ethics and power as part of a methodological study in the social sciences.

I want to state at the outset of this chapter that I developed a clear description of the purpose of my intended research, not only to get approval from the university ethics committee to conduct this study or to simply gain access to the research site, but also to secure consent from each participant that I encountered in the field. The research involved an extended ethnographic study of the social and economic relations in selected hair styling salons in Mowbray, Cape Town. The study further sought to explore the power relations between the researcher and the research participant within the context of the hair salon. These salons are owned by, staffed by and frequented by migrant African women. Data was collected through participant observation as well as semi-structured interviews with the customers, owners and salon staff. Presently, all research data collected, including consent forms, audio-recordings and field notes, are stored in my home office in a filing cabinet to which only I have access as I am the only holder of the key.

The aim of this study is to analyse dimensions of power and ethics within the context of the research project. The study had dual aims, one ethnographic and the other methodological. At an ethnographic level the study seeks to analyse how female migrants from African countries in Cape Town chose specific economic activities that express their cultural or gendered identity. Methodologically, this study is concerned with identifying and analysing how the relations of power between the researcher and the research participants impacted on a study such as this, specifically considering the social and economic context of the research participants.

In relation to the hair salons of Mowbray in Cape Town, the central ethnographic objective of this study was to understand how meaning is attached to specific or 'regional' hairstyling practices and techniques offered by salon owners that provide ‘consumers’ with various styling options. The central ethical inquiry was to consider the power negotiations between the researcher and the research participants, African women migrants, in the context of the

hair salon. It is within these parameters of inquiry that I have applied ethnography as a research design because it is best suited to the wide range of forces that informs women's decisions, behaviour and acts of self-definition within the context of the hair salon, whether as consumers or service providers.

Bryman (2001) highlights several key features of ethnography that relate to this study: '(1) Ethnographers immerse themselves in a society (2) to collect descriptive data via fieldwork (3) concerning the culture of its members (4) from the perspective of the meaning members of that society attach to their social world (5) and render the collected data intelligible and significant to fellow academics and other readers'(2001). My interest in ethnography is not limited to culture but also includes the experience of the research participant, power relations and the political economy of the research participant's work.

Creswell notes that ethnography is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies a supposedly coherent and stable cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period by collecting primarily observational and interview data (Creswell 2009:13). I am particularly drawn to Creswell's third component of research design within which the researcher always determines the forms of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell 2009: 15). To me this is consistent with Neuman's contention that all social researchers systematically collect and analyse empirical data and carefully examine the patterns in them to understand and explain social life (Neuman 2000:139). From these assertions, it appears that the researcher holds a great deal of power over the research process. However, the power the research participants have over the research can be seen in ways where the research participant evades, subverts and at times changes the research. Building rapport with research participants is central to qualitative research which suggests that power at times does not rest only with the researcher but also the research participant which is consistent with the feminist approach I have taken in this research.

Considering the nature of my research project – insofar as it is located at the intersection of migration, gender, economics and identity - I have turned to Creswell (2009) for his proposed integration of a philosophical worldview (ontology), strategies of inquiry (epistemology) and research methods. He distinguishes between various worldviews: positivist, social constructivist, advocacy and participatory, and the pragmatic. Though not exclusively, the worldview or lens through which this study was explored is that of the social constructivist worldview also commonly referred to as an interpretive worldview.

In assuming an interpretive approach, I adopt Neuman's (1997) conception as a starting point insofar as he suggests that the aim of the researcher is to develop an understanding of social life and determine how people construct meaning in natural settings. He further asserts that human action acquires meaning among people who share a system of meaning that permits them to interpret it as a socially relevant sign or action (Neuman 1997:69). In this regard, Simone (2000), in his exploration of immigrants in Johannesburg, notes that 'as the disenfranchised had limited space and opportunity to actualise their own development visions and agendas, to institutionalise a working sense of who they were to themselves and the larger world' (a system of meaning), they are forced to reconfigure and refashion their identities (2000:427). Thus, similarly for the migrant women in my study, their identities are continuously remade in relation to both their country of origin (site of cultural and ethnic affiliation) and their country of settlement (site of economic engagement and mobility).

The research method applied comprised of participant observation and this formed a central part of the immersion process. Dewalt et al. (1998) note that participant observation makes possible to the researcher to learn actively, engage in the lives of people and achieve an understanding of people and their behaviour. However, I made a deliberate decision to restrict social relations with and observations about research participants to salon working hours. Despite the temptation to gain insight into their social lives outside the salon, I restrained myself from pursuing such possibilities despite the possible impact this may have had on the information and data I received from the research participants. This restraint was motivated by on the one hand practical and logistical reasons and on the other hand that the research site was limited to the salon. My reason for selecting to work in a salon was because it provided me with a relatively stable location where I could conduct my research. I simply chose the hair salon for practical purposes as I knew that I would be able to observe interactions with and among the stylists over an extended period. From the onset, I planned to use unstructured interviews as another method of data collection as such an approach allowed for a space for flexibility and the organic emergence of ideas and topics that inform the research question. Coupled with participant observation, I used semi-structured interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of these African women migrants' lived experience. All the interviews were conducted on a one on one basis in a more private designated space within the salon environment.

In his analysis of communication in ethnographic interviews Chen asserts that '[p]ower in ethnographic interviewing is always negotiated, and the spoken languages of interviewer and interviewee affect ethnographic interviews and power dynamics in dialogue' (2011:119). Recognising the power dynamics in dialogue, creates a platform for reflection and analysis. April L. Few asserts that 'language is symbolic power that defines and validates experiences' (2003:211). Whilst participant observation and semi-structured interviews are non-threatening methods, my suspicion about the potential threat to the female migrant's status as a result of my study was confirmed by one participant who refused to grant me an interview based on the language differences between us. Throughout the fieldwork experience stylists would converse in their mother tongue among themselves which often left me feeling powerless. Power therefore is not always only located with the researcher but the research participant through various tactics and behaviours holds some elements of power over the research project. It thus appears that language at various stages of the research project could either alienate or embrace both the researcher and/or the research participant and as noted by Chen (2011), language impacts significantly on the nature of the researcher-researched relations.

4.2 Delimitation and Scope of Study

From the outset, I was aware of some of the obvious parameters to this study which were geographic and commercial. The decision to limit my inquiry to this neighbourhood (Mowbray) was primarily motivated by the fact that, (1) the area had a high concentration of African hairstyling salons, and (2) that it is located close to one of the city's major transport interchanges which meant that the salons were accessed by clients from across the city. Secondly, I decided to restrict this study only to those African hair styling salons formally operating within the commercial environment of this neighbourhood. There are of course many similar African hairstyling salons throughout the city, but it was my observation that this neighbourhood has a particularly high concentration of these salons. My intention was to select at least 25% of the 36 hair salons in the area to determine which of these falls within the ambit of my proposed selection criteria and then select the ones best suited for my investigation.

Further, while I recognise that there are informal salons where women have their hair styled in a house or on the street at the transport interchange, operating within the neighbourhood, these stylists have been excluded from the study because they can be regarded as irregular in nature and the business is often run by an individual rather than a team of stylists under the supervision of an owner or manager as is common in the area. These businesses are often not licensed and are shared among several traders to cover the rental space. Similarly, while I was aware of migrant African women engaged in other economic activities within the neighbourhood such as retail, internet cafes and restaurants, also owned, staffed and frequented by African migrants, the salon presented itself as a more viable site for research because, due to the nature of the business, staff and clients remain in the same location for at least several hours at a time. These salons also retained their staff over extended periods of employment. This thus made it an ideal environment to engage in observation, as well as a space where as a researcher, I could develop relationships of relative trust over time.

The demographic focus of this study offered particular ethical challenges in as far as it is related to rights, beneficence and justice. I did not presume that all the participants within this study have legal status to work within South Africa, and I recognised and acknowledged that they had the right to conceal or disclose their status. This presented me as well as the respondents with various challenges. The legal status of respondents was disregarded in the selection of research site and of research participants, firstly because it was considered as probably irrelevant for the findings of the study, and secondly, if I had made it a prerequisite I feared that it could potentially affect the participation of respondents.

In consideration of the possible anxiety a study of this kind might provoke among some research participants, I decided that if a potential threat were to be experienced by any of the research participants, my intention was to refer specific individuals to the Trauma Centre, a community counselling facility which is located in Woodstock, and thus accessible by a fifteen-minute taxi ride from the salon. At the end of my field research none of the research participants had reported being negatively affected by my research as far as it relates to their status as foreign nationals living in South Africa. The Trauma Centre in Cape Town provides counselling and support services to asylum seekers and refugees who have been affected by traumatic experiences in their country of origin as well as the harassment and xenophobia within South Africa.

During a preliminary visit to the area in mid-2013 with the view to conduct my research in this geographical location, I became aware of the possible obstacles that I might encounter in terms of gaining research access to the salon owners and staff in the identified hair salons. I had a longstanding relationship with some of the salons due to my personal history as a client with the salons in the area. This, coupled with my interest in issues of migration, gender and the politics of hair amongst black women, provoked in me an interest to think more critically and academically about the environment of the salon. Between June 2013 and May 2014, I visited 13 salons on a regular basis, some of which I had previously used for my personal hairstyling needs, in the hope of securing a provisional agreement for me to conduct my research at selected salons.

My initial excitement of possibly securing a site, since the salon owner indicated that she was willing to allow me to conduct my research in her salon, was soon dampened. The salon owner informed me that she needed to give it some thought and consult with her husband as to the possibilities of me using her salon as my research site. Several visits to the salon followed to establish the possibility of using P's Salon (pseudonym) as my research site. After three weeks of exhausting negotiations, P proved to be evasive in providing me with the possibility of using her salon as my research site. P's hesitance could possibly stem from the fact that she was not the only decision-maker and, whilst she may have been willing, her husband may not necessarily have been keen on the idea. I made this decision as a further delay in securing a site could have potentially compromised my research. After visiting four more hair salons with the hope of securing a research site, M was the only one who agreed to provide access to her salon. As the researcher, I was left vulnerable by the threat of not finding a research site because research participants had the power to deny access.

Despite these initial reservations and anxieties, I believed that I could overcome my research obstacles with meticulous planning. At the beginning of my fieldwork I quickly realised that the neatly delineated plan I had to gain access to the research site was naïve and possibly a bit ambitious. Even though I indicated the purely academic purpose of my visit, most potential participants responded with caution and suspicion. I attribute such sentiments to the feelings of vulnerability of foreign nationals living in a country other than their own. I empathised with that feeling since I lived as a migrant in the United Kingdom for five years, firstly working in low-level jobs and secondly as a self-funding student.

Following my initial visits, I entered M's salon who was willing to grant me access to her salon. M was from Ghana and she employs two stylists from Zimbabwe and two from the DRC. In addition, she sublets a section of her salon to another salon owner whose country of origin is Zimbabwe, who herself employs a stylist from Zimbabwe.

One final area of contention which I experienced during my fieldwork was the issue of consent. Although the owner of the salon readily allowed me access to the site and the staff, I harboured an element of doubt as to its authenticity, especially since, despite granting me access to the site and her stylists, the owner reluctantly promised to be interviewed. This provoked in me some anxiety about whether stylists would agree to be interviewed willingly , or whether their decisions were influenced by the fact that the owner gave consent and that they therefore, by association or employment, were obliged to grant me an interview. I remained vigilant and operated within the parameters of ethical research guidelines by directly inquiring as to the possibility of granting me an interview from the stylists themselves. By being granted access to the salon by the owner and using it as my research site, I am of the view that the data collected through the interviews, coupled with my observations throughout the time I spent at the salon, would be sufficient to gain insight into the reasons why African migrant women enter the hairstyling industry. Notwithstanding the fact of the seemingly thin base of material, it served as a rich source for the analysis and interpretation of dimensions of power and ethics which is at the centre of this study

4.2.1 Engaging the Research Field

Margery Wolf's assertion that the 'first field trip is a stunning rollercoaster of self-doubt, boredom, excitement, disorientation, uncertainty, exhaustion, bullying, being bullied, being cajoled – during which we somehow accumulate data' (1992:128) resonated with me from the moment I stepped into the world of ethnographic research. My neatly delineated plan of action was compromised the moment I entered the field. I had a vision of how my research would unfold, only for my lens to be clouded and soon enough I realised that, as Wolf notes, I had to be in the right place at the right time. Margery Wolf (1992) further asserts that, in our quest to obtain data to somehow make sense of certain social phenomena, that very first field trip is filled with a myriad of emotions and experiences. It is with this assertion in mind that I wish to present an outline of those very first interactions. The relevance of this narrative is that interpreting those first interactions highlights some of the power dynamics that played out in the field.

In attempting to remain objective in selecting my site, I walked into the first salon with confidence and certainty that I would conduct my research at P's salon after the first visit, but it became apparent after approximately two weeks that this would not be the case. I have become aware that as a researcher one would need to reflect on and bear in mind the scholarly cautions about the pitfalls when conducting ethnographic research. The right to self-determination on the part of the research participant as one of the cornerstones of research and the temporal nature of my research as a student became an area of contention. Not having the leisure of spending an extended period in the field, to develop rapport with the owner of the salon, limited the data collection process. Such limitations led me to pursue other avenues and I therefore continued my journey to secure a research site.

I had designed a route through the neighbourhood to identify the salons that would fall within the scope of my criteria. During preliminary visits to several salons, it was made clear to me that it is a highly transient community and many salons have a short life expectancy (as is true of most entrepreneurial enterprises). The transient nature of the salon industry could have had a negative impact on my research project and with this knowledge I decided to explore a salon that appeared stable.

Selection was thus narrowed down to a single site where the salon's stylists were proficient in speaking English. Based on the above criteria, I by default found a hair salon as my site of study as it provided me with the opportunity to conduct an ethnographic study to effectively consider various dimensions of the ethical and power relations between the researcher and the research participant.

4.2.2 Sampling

The most commonly applied form of sampling within qualitative research is that of non-probability sampling of which purposive sampling is an example. Purposive sampling refers to a type of sampling where the selection of the study population is deliberately based on specific characteristics of the research participants. As this study is concerned with migrant women working in the hairstyling industry, purposive sampling is best suited as a means of sampling. I have selected purposive sampling as it is generally regarded as suitable in three situations. 'First, a researcher uses it to select unique cases that are especially informative. Second, a researcher may use purposive sampling to select difficult to reach specialised populations and thirdly, when the researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation' (Neuman 2000). I applied purposive sampling as I considered the nature

of the research population as specialised as this study was conducted in the context of a specific hair salon.

Thus, I applied a purposive sampling method as the research project dealt with a specialised population which was based on the following variables: the length of time the salon had been in existence (no less than three years), and the owner or manager of the salon needed to be from anywhere on the African continent and someone that sought refuge or asylum in South Africa. Participants had to be resident in South Africa for more than three years and willing to provide access to the salon and to tell their story. I identified key informants to explore themes within the study as well as to gain insight into the topic of hair and identity. In such an ethnographic study as this purposive sampling was most suitable because it lends itself to 'thick description' while it remains concerned with the context. Ultimately, ethnography is concerned with the cultural significance of social phenomena and as a method was best suited for this study as it sought to explore cultural identifications within the context of migration, gender and economics.

4.2.3 Field Access

Geographic identification and preliminary exploration of the field in a sense provided me with an overview of what to anticipate. However, negotiating access without being coercive was something I learnt early on during the research endeavour. After waiting with anticipation and trepidation for almost three weeks to know whether I would have access to the salon I had identified as my research site, I was denied access. Remaining within the framework of the research methodology, I discovered another salon that also fit the criteria I had set for site selection. I approached the salon owner who recalled me making preliminary inquiries among her staff. The significance of this moment lies within the fact that she inquired whether I wanted to discuss my request in private to which I declined as I believed that this may have impacted negatively on my relationship with the stylists. To not appear to be in cahoots with the owner of the salon, but rather to develop relationships with the stylists as well as the owner. I explained to her the purpose and aim of my thesis as a requirement for my degree completion. I further inquired as to the most suitable times I could access the salon to which she replied that she has strict guidelines.

The above short description from my field notes captures the tone of our initial exchange, reflecting precisely the kind of negotiations of power and articulations of positionality that I had hoped to explore through this study.

M asked if I would observe them to which I answered yes and that I would also like to interview the staff and herself. I was available from Thursday to Saturday and would work at the salon for free, I informed her. I also informed M that I would not use the name of the salon nor any of the persons working or the owner in any of my documentation or discussions.

M asked to see my student card and inquired about my area of interest as well as the department at the university I am affiliated with. I handed her my student card and she wrote down all my details. We agreed on a time that I will come to the salon which was from 9am until 5pm. She noted that I am not allowed to come to the salon over the weekends as the salon was very busy during those days. She indicated that I was only allowed to visit the salon Thursdays and Friday. I tried to persuade her to allow me to come over the weekends to which she informed me she would give it some thought. She also noted that I would only be allowed in her salon for a period of 12 weeks. I thanked her and confirmed that I would return the following week.

It is against this appearance of hostility that I wish to for a moment reflect on the notion of power and power relations between the researcher and the research participant. In the face of such reluctance I endeavour to acknowledge my role and position within the research relationship. These instances described above demonstrate how migrant women activated, negotiated and expressed their power and agency in relation to me as a prospective researcher. I am reminded of Margery Wolf's assertion of the messiness of entering the field (1992). Negotiating access is not limited to those first moments of contact but access is continuously renegotiated.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

In a study such as this one where the researcher explores issues pertaining to power and ethics within the research setting, data collection methods are one of the key elements where power and ethics are at play. It is then for this reason my supervisor, Professor Kees van der Waal, and I are the only people who have reviewed the data obtained during the research process. In addition, all data on my computer pertaining to the research are password-protected. The sections that follow presents the methods I used to collect the data.

4.3.1 Participant Observation

Building rapport with research participants is central to ethnography and consists of creating an as close as is possible authentic relationship between the researcher and the research participants. I subscribed to a partial degree of participation as the nature of this investigation did not allow for the complete immersion into the lives of the participants as the 'field' was restricted to the salon itself. This limited the examination of the study to a location which does not provide a wider view of the participants' identity beyond the salon. Notwithstanding these limitations, this site made provision for sufficient insight into the lives of the women, as participant observation allowed me to gain an insider's perspective and yet not claim the position of an insider by the mere fact that we are all female and black. Much of my initial participation was limited to observations and the occasional conversation with stylists. Whilst these interactions appeared to be superficial, they contributed greatly towards building rapport with the stylists which ultimately resulted in some of them granting an interview and me being invited to actively participate in the braiding of hair of clients.

4.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Barbara Heyl, in her chapter on Ethnographic Interviewing, suggests the elements that set ethnographic interviewing apart from other forms of interviewing are dependent on the time the researcher has spent with research participants, the level of rapport and respect developed as well as the quality of the relationship between the two (Hyel in Atkinson et.al 2001:369). As I had developed enough rapport with the stylists over a period of four weeks, I inquired about the possibility of an interview. During the fieldwork period, I planned to interview at least 5 participants including the salon owner as the key informant. Whilst the salon owner agreed to be interviewed, she never granted me the opportunity to do so. I managed to conduct unstructured interviews with two of the hair stylists, with the other two refusing to be interviewed. It was during these interview meetings that I gained consent from the research participants upon explaining the objectives of my investigation. Both stylists agreed to be interviewed while being recorded. These interviews, together with the field notes collected during the fieldwork process provided sufficient data to address the central questions of this research project.

4.4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

As my research is rooted in a qualitative research framework, I opted for a data analysis and interpretation process within a grounded theory context. Grounded Theory according to Glaser and Strauss can be described as 'the discovery of theory from data systematically

obtained from social research' (1967:2). Analysis of data is not confined to methodology but is significant throughout the research project and according to Charmaz (2006) grounded theory is concerned with both the data collection and data analysis processes. Throughout the data collection process broad categories emerged which I considered during the data analysis process. Through my observations and interviews I could map my data and delineate certain categories as the basis for my analysis. Through the process of coding which Charmaz (2006) asserts as the interrogation of data to gain an understanding of its meaning, I was able to identify three broad areas:

1. Narratives of Migration where I considered memories of home and experiences of migration.
2. Labour and Migrant Economies where I looked at work history since migrating and then how they imagine their future.
3. Hairstyling practices in which I explored familial and cultural origins of hair practices as well as hairstyling practices within the salon.

These broad categories, which are discussed in the next chapter, enabled me to explore the key ethnographic elements that emerged through the data analysis process. In terms of the ethics and power relations focus of this study, I paid particular attention to positionality by focussing on the relationship between the researcher and the research participant in the conversations and observations around migration, economics and hairstyling practices. I also looked at reflexivity in research where I explored its practice as well as the shortcomings within this research project.

Within the context of migration and gender two key elements emerged. The first, is the extent to which power was activated, negotiated and expressed by migrant women and the second was how issues of identity gave expression in terms of culture and gender inside and outside the salon.

This chapter outlined my research design, research practices and engagements with the research participants. While I had a neatly delineated plan, I realised that the research field is organic and dynamic and that as a researcher I had to be receptive to the changing conditions and expectations. Ultimately, my research design and method was critical in guiding me in my engagement with the research participants and their social world. The next chapter will focus on the notions of power in the field as well as the empirical evidence that I used to understand the reasons that compelled women from other African countries to engage in

certain economic activities such as the hairdressing industry. It further seeks to explore the power relations between the researcher and the research participant.

Chapter 5: Migration, Labour and Gender

In this chapter I wish to present an outline of the response of participants of this research project with regards to their migration history, gendered experiences and work in the country of destination. In the development of this chapter I elected to present the data collected as per my observations and encounters with the stylists as well as the two in-depth interviews. I have selected to organise the presentation of data into three broad areas in addressing the central questions of this research project. These include (1) narratives of migration; (2) labour and migration economies and (3) hairstyling practices.

Salon Context

Firstly, I wish to provide a brief description of the daily routine of the salon. On a typical day, the salon opened at 7am and closed at 5pm. The salon was open to any member of the public who wished to make use of the hairstyling service offered. No appointments were necessary which means anyone could request a service at any time during the opening hours. The stylists sourced products from suppliers in the vicinity. Many of these suppliers were also migrants and it appeared that there was a strong network amongst the salons and the suppliers. The salon not only provided hairstyling services but many hawkers entered the salon trying to make a sale. Most these hawkers were also migrants and the type of goods they sold ranged from vegetables to cosmetics and clothes. All these different economic activities occurred while the stylists were busy with styling customers' hair.

5.1 Narratives of Migration

In this section I will discuss three areas of interest, based on my observations and the interviews conducted during the fieldwork process. These include the circumstances of migration as articulated by the research participants, their relation to family and country of origin, and finally hair as a commodity that facilitates possibilities to migrate. The ethnographic aim of the research was to understand why migrant women from other parts of the African continent who settle in Cape Town engage in hairstyling work or enter the salon business. All the participants that I encountered in the field were from different parts of the African continent and these included countries such as Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ghana. As noted in the review of literature in this thesis pertaining to migration, Simone (2000) distinguishes between four categories of people on the move: (1) political refugees, (2) economic opportunists, (3) brain drain, and (4) affiliates. The passage and responses below reflect the migrants' experiences of South Africa and their interactions

with locals and government officials that provide a base for comparison between South Africa as the host country and home, as well as stories of mobility since their arrival in South Africa and general experiences of being a migrant in South Africa.

The two stylists I interviewed are both from Zimbabwe. H is a married 28-year-old female from a village approximately 200 km outside the capital Harare. She left her home country in search of a better life. She describes South Africa as the land of milk and honey. Promoted by many stories about the availability of jobs, she made the journey to South Africa in 2009. She travelled by bus and has only been back once in 2011. Upon arrival, she soon realised that finding work was not that easy, but she found a hairstyling job with a Ghanaian man who ran his hair salon from a container in Khayelitsha. She found this job because of braiding hair at home. H expressed her fears of living in Khayelitsha and later when she moved to Mitchells Plain. She considered both these townships to be dangerous for foreigners. Through word of mouth she found her current job as a stylist with M in Mowbray. Her journey with hair started when she was a young village girl helping her aunt with braiding women's hair. She notes that hairstyling is not her preferred career choice but at this point she can feed her family. She is married to a Zimbabwean man and with their 20-month old son they live in Wynberg. H's desire is to study further, but since she only has her O-levels she considers it to be difficult in South Africa.

C is a 30-year-old married female with one child and she grew up in the capital city, Harare. She started her journey in the hairstyling industry 8 years ago. She trained as a hairstylist in Harare and after her training she moved to Botswana where she worked as a hairstylist for four years. After returning to Zimbabwe for one year she came to South Africa and started working in a hair salon where she worked with styled hair of both black and white clients. She heard through word of mouth about the vacancy at M's and has been working at the salon since 2009. C gained her interest and experience from her older sisters who attended boarding school in Zimbabwe and would during school holidays show her how to do various hairstyles. C prides herself in her ability to work both with black and white people's hair which creates more opportunities for employment.

In the first of two sections concerned with economics, I here outline the various labour migratory journeys through which these African women migrants came to their current work. The women migrants that I encountered in the salon had come to their current work via

distinct journeys and here map their labour migrant journeys until they joined the salon. This section addresses issues of work, making money, and generating and sustaining their mobility as migrants as well as their economic relations with 'home' and finally how these impact on their imaginaries of themselves. Below, the labour migratory journeys of H and C respectively:

> *H: when we came here to South Africa it was like greener pastures (ok)…So to get a job you know was easy, anything you want to do you just do, so we came here to find out no that was not the case… any kind of job helping me lot of money, when we reached here we find out it was actually not true.*
>
> *H: I then I looked for a job. I looked here and then I found a job here. There was a friend of mine, his brother used to work here so he told me: ah, there's a vacancy here, I don't know if they have taken anyone, so you can just go and try. So, I came in and M said: ok, you can try and when you get a customer we will try your skills to see how far we can go. From then until now that was in August 2009 (ok) until now I've been working here (ok).*
>
> Field notes (FN): People are certainly making money because there is a market for it. Just sitting here over the last couple of weeks and seeing the number of clients coming in and out there's obviously money in it.
>
> *C: I started working at another salon on Main Road. You see there's another… called Bright. Just after working for Afro Hair designs, I went back to Zimbabwe and when I came back I didn't want to go back there and somebody directed me here.*

The hair salon is to some extent an economic hub with hairstyling as the primary commodity and other goods as secondary as these goods are sold on an ad hoc basis and at the discretion of the salon owner. The salon further appears to be a site for the workers to retain their connectedness with their fellow countrymen and other Africans. These external traders, mainly women, support one another through the sale of their respective goods. These support networks and links are what Douglas Massey describes as migrant networks which are 'sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin' (Massey 1988:386). The picture presented provided the researcher with an understanding of the challenges these women face as migrants. It further emphasises the very nature of

positionality and more especially the class differences between myself as the researcher and the research participants.

The second aspect of migrant economies which I explored in my interviews with the research participants extended beyond their working relationships within the salon, whether they were employed or subcontracted. I sought to focus on how these women imagined their current work situation and what they imagined about their futures. In this section I address issues of imagined economic futures and how these are understood and articulated in relation to their families or other domestic networks. Most of the research participants remained ambivalent about the apparent uncertainty of their personal futures, as is often to be expected in the context of migration. Although the stylists agreed on the decline in the hair styling industry, it is nonetheless a professional livelihood that they are invested in. Almost all these women migrants appeared to have an imagined economic future that extended beyond the current work context. Apart from X who is also a PhD candidate at a local university, and C who did post-high school training in hair styling, most of the women migrants appeared to lack formal post high school education, thus leaving them vulnerable to structural forces that may constrain their mobility. To the issues raised above the research participants had the following to say:

> FN: Thabo recounted how the industry has lost its glamour in Mowbray.
>
> *H: It was but now it is fading cos there are lots of salons here, it has changed, the business is, the business is not thriving like it did before.*
>
> *H: So, I wouldn't want to say okay I'm going to die doing this.*
>
> *H: I have a plan… I wanna go back to school obviously. One of the things I want is to further my education.*
>
> FN: During the interview, I had offered to email some details of scholarships and university courses for H, and I did send her those. On 11/07 H came and sat next to me and thanked me for the link I had sent her. … H also told me that she had looked at other scholarships and was interested in the Graca Machel scholarship.
>
> FN: She is interested in Public Health… She informed me that she has O-levels which should then be assessed by SAQA to determine the level at which she will be ranked in South Africa.

> *C: You see and then when I finished school in 1998 in 2000 I did my hairdressing in Zimbabwe. And then I did the relaxing part… So in 2000 I went to college for a year and I did relaxing* (relaxing refers to the straightening of curly hair using a chemical cream or lotion).

During several exchanges with research participants it became quite clear that for many of the stylists, hairstyling was a rite of passage into the more lucrative aspects of the hair economy such as supply, import-export, or salon ownership.

In semi-structured interviews, I discussed with participants their experiences of having moved to South Africa. I wanted to hear their articulations and reflection on their migratory journey, especially considering the general sentiment that South Africa was, on the one hand, regarded as a haven from poverty and under-development, and yet its social engagement with African migrants was also characterised by hostility and xenophobia. One participant had the following to say about her home environment:

> *H: I was scared of the area cos it was in Khayelitsha and…I was living in Mitchells Plain (ok) in Colorado, so it was like two different places, the black people, (yes) and they're dangerous.*

This exchange with H demonstrates the vulnerability of black African migrants and in particular the dangers they are faced with that come from the xenophobic sentiments among predominately black South Africans.

Whilst I was unable to determine the specific circumstances of migration of most of the stylists, and especially those from the DRC as well as of the owner of the salon, I assumed political refuge on the part of the stylists originating from DCR and economically motivated labour migration on the part of the owner and those from Zimbabwe. These assumptions are based on the prevalence of war and political turmoil in the DRC and the economic instability in Zimbabwe. As South Africa is considered as one of the leading economic hubs on the African continent, some people are attracted by the idea of having a better life in South Africa and would then migrate based on economic reasons. The latter is evident from stylists' remarks:

> *H: but when I came here I didn't, I wasn't going to come to do hair (ok), so when we go, when we came here to South Africa (uummm) it was like greener pastures (ok).*
>
> *H: I went back in 2011 and since then I haven't gone back.*

> *C: I moved from Zimbabwe, I went to Botswana. I stayed there for almost 4 years and that is when I was working in a salon and then I went back to Zim. I stayed there for like a year and then I came here [to South Africa] in 2009.*
>
> FN: I enquired from HL about her trip to Zimbabwe. She responded*: It was great but things are really expensive now especially with the weak Rand,* she said. She also told me that she missed home but that she could not live there.

Departing from the premise that there is a demand for hairstyling options, hair salons and stylists supply various options to fulfil this demand and it is evident that all the stylists engaged in the hair or salon industry do so for economic reasons. Francis B Nyamnjoh et.al. in The Domestication of Hair and Modernised Consciousness in Cameroon: A Critique in the context of Globalisation asserts that the 'real issue with salons is money' (2002:115). While H appeared to have 'fallen into' the trade whereas C has specifically been trained as a stylist, it is evident that both stylists from Zimbabwe migrated to South Africa for economic reasons. The salon not only provided those that sought refuge in South Africa with an income but also did so for those that migrated for political reasons and who had the opportunity to be self-sustaining and independent in their host country. Later in the chapter I will address the issue of globalisation and the significance of hair as a commodity and its relation to traditional and cultural infusion.

What is evident from my encounters with research participants is that there remained a link with their country of origin as well as the importance of the interconnectedness between people from the same country. The following observations reiterate the link these participants had with their home country through remittances, food and home visits.

> FN: One of the stylists' phone goes off and the clients joke about her two phones. H then informed her that the one phone she uses is for sending money home.
>
> FN: around midday C and HL enter the salon with goods purchased from what appears to be a second-hand shop. Much of the conversation was around the quality of the goods compared to the price they paid. These purchases were made for friends and family.
>
> FN: GL walks in with her shopping. MF asks why she has so many bottles of oil. HL tells MF that she will give some of it to her family members in Zimbabwe. I asked her if the oil was on special, to which she replied that it was a good deal. She told MF

> that she will drive to Zimbabwe with all her goods and that she had not been home for 3 years.

Finally, in terms of narratives of migration, participants' responses during the interviews and exchanges in the salon made it clear that their migratory processes were much more complex than a linear move from home country to host country. Similarly, they maintain a complex range of transnational relationships around the southern African sub-continent and beyond. Some of these issues appear in their reflections and experiences, as indicated below:

> FN: (M's) the owner spoke with someone on the phone and made mention about having a conversation with her niece in the United States.
>
> FN: M's grandmother had passed on and she will travel to Ghana the next week to attend the funeral.
>
> FN: Later in the day the same lady that sold collard greens on a previous occasion returned to the salon, the Zimbabwean stylists once again made purchases and they had a conversation in Shona. I asked H how she cooked the greens and she told me it is cooked like spinach.
>
> H: While the client's hair is being done, she receives a call and speaks in Mandarin. After the call, H commented on the fact that the client could speak Mandarin and that she seemed to have learnt the language fast since she'd been in China for a short while.
>
> FN: I asked her if she had been to Mozambique to which she responded: no, but her sister has. I asked whether she lives there and CB told me that her sister just visited her in-laws. I then learnt that she lives with her Mozambican husband in South Africa.

Political and economic instability is considered as part of the reasons why people leave their country of birth. The women that participated in this research project narrated their respective journeys as such. Notwithstanding the hostility and xenophobic sentiments displayed towards them, they remained in South Africa. Hairstyling, whether self-taught or professionally trained, was utilised as a commodity not only to survive in the host country but also to retain the flow of remittances and in so doing retain connectedness with family in the home country. The economic opportunities provided by the commodification of hair can thus be viewed as a factor in migration as it allows the migrant an element of economic

viability and possibility. Whilst these stylists maintained a level of self-determination and agency their experiences of migration are not what they had imagined and this thus placed them in a vulnerable position as potential research participants. The class differentiation between myself as the researcher and the research participants presented a power imbalance in as far as it relates to my privileged middle-class existence and the research participants having to work and live under challenging circumstances. In the excerpts below, one of the stylists provides an account of her experience and expectation about migrating to South Africa.

H: but when I came here I didn't, I wasn't going to come to do hair (ok), so when we go, when we came here to South Africa (pause) it was like greener pastures (ok). So, to get a job you know was easy, anything you want to do you just do so we came here to find out no that was not the case
HS: Oh, so that is what you heard, is that the word in Zimbabwe?
H: Yes.
HS: That it is easier
H: When we came like, I couldn't believe
HS: Ok
H: So, things were bad before (referring to the economic instability in Zimbabwe).

The stylist articulated her anxieties relating to her life living in certain parts of Cape Town.

H: I started working in Khayelitsha, there was a container (pause) there was a man from Ghana he had a container (ok) so he was doing relaxing so he couldn't braid, so the girlfriend I did the girlfriend's hair and then she was like just come because he doesn't have anyone to do braid (ok) so I went there I worked for like (pause) for a couple of weeks. I don't know I was scared of the area cos it was in Khayelitsha.
HS: ok, and where did you live at the time?
H: I was living in Mitchells Plain (ok) in Colorado so it was like two different places.
HS: Yes.
H: There is the black people (yes) and they're dangerous and there is the coloured people (yes) so I was like oops let me just (laughter) *I still want to live (yeah). So, I went there for like eeeh I think two weeks.*

As a result of my research and my interrogation into the lives of the research participants, one of the stylists recalled the difficulties in her own country as well as her experiences in South Africa. These recollections and experiences were both filled with disappointment, fear and anxiety which may or may not have surfaced if she had not participated in my research, but which also indicated the class difference between us and the higher personal risk that these women had to face.

5.2 Labour and Migrant Economies

As indicated in the section above, I established not only that these women migrated for economic reasons, but their comments have shown that they were active in the production of their mobility. In the context of the salon these migrant women engaged in a variety of economic relations within the host country and with home. The relations between the stylists, the traders and their various clients were generally jovial and trusting, with stylists often working together or sharing arduous and labour intensive tasks such as making plaits and doing braiding. Below are some of my observations about the economic culture of the salon:

> FN: Stylists have their meals in the salon during the day.
>
> *CB: Everywhere we go we treat each other like family. We help each other*.
>
> FN: The three Zimbabwean stylists were all tending to clients. Throughout the morning, each group (Zimbabwean and Congolese) conversed in their own language.
>
> *H: It is our loyal customers that come back and when a friend sees (her hair) or people walking will ask where did you do your hair.*
>
> FN: The phone rings and it is apparently one of the regular but difficult clients. The conversation among the stylists evolved around difficult clients. C noted that she has a difficult client scheduled for the next morning and it is not something she is looking forward to.
>
> FN: P left the shop to purchase synthetic hair from the supplier and upon her return told me that I should write in my thesis about these well-off clients who are not willing to pay for the services but are making unrealistic demands from the stylists.

Developing a rapport with research participants is essential in qualitative research and more especially ethnographic research. In these observations and interviews above stylists demonstrate their agency and engaged me as a researcher around issues that they find challenging. Whilst on the one hand I was still acknowledged as a student on the other hand they felt comfortable to talk. It is during such moments that the researcher needs to be vigilant to not lose sight of his or her position and I wish to return to Few et.al's (2003) assertion that the way we speak, dress and behave within the research setting influences the researcher-researched relationship.

5.3 Hairstyling practices

In the final section of data presentation, I outline those specific responses research participants offered in reaction to my questions about hairstyling practices, their recollection of hairstyling practices from childhood, and finally what contemporary hairstyling practices and techniques are in circulation. In response to questions about hairstyling practices and childhood experiences, research participants did not regard it as a critical factor in terms of influencing their career choices or styling practices. All the stylists recalled some form of indigenous braiding or plaiting practices that they acquired during their childhood. Often familial styling practices were remembered with vivid emotional and historical detail. Their ambivalent relation and recollection about hair and childhood are captured in the following remarks:

> *H: (recounting hair styling her mother did for her): It was natural like, she used to plait it with wool (HS: ok yes) ja, she would do those big like plaits, she would plait it with wool and it was like that maybe for the whole week… They would put it in this cream I don't remember the name. It didn't use to burn but it used to smell. The smell was so bad (HS giggle) we used to call it relax.*
>
> *H: They'd put it in your hair and you stayed with it for some time. They combed it out and then they'd wash your hair. It was like slimy, they put it in your hair, comb it out and then your hair is blown out. So, your hair is straight and you can manage it. And then after that when you go back to school you have to plait, those plaits again (HS: OK). Because sometimes they use to braid it, I don't remember the braid they use.*
>
> *Client 1: They had to panel beat my hair. My mother used to put grease in my hair to make it softer. They used to wrestle me to the ground to put the grease in my hair.*
>
> *H: (on her school in Zimbabwe:) when you are in school, some of our schools they don't allow you to go to school with braids, you can't do corn rows, you can't plait it, you just have to cut it. When you're growing up, obviously when you are still small they would do those plaits with wool.*

I am reminded by Zimitri Erasmus's (1997) discussion around the polarities of hair and the extent to which black women's identities are entangled their hair. She further asserts that polarities are sexualised, political and gendered. Black women's identities are consistently and continuously shaped by their hair.

In addition to memories of childhood experiences of hair styling, research participants offered remarks about the link between their cultures and the politics of hair. So, while on the one hand they appeared to mute cultural differentiation, they nonetheless managed to speak of some socio-cultural practices related to hair. Stylists disregarded the possible cultural differences in the hairstyling practices but at the same time they referred to how stylists from other parts of the African continent braided hair which was different to their own:

> *C: Long ago in Zimbabwe what they used to do when they are doing their hair, they used to use thread and wool and they used to cornrow it, actually they used to call them bongs... that's how people used to wear hair in Zimbabwe. That was for the age of my grandmother.*
>
> *H: When a baby is how old? when they cut, we also do that. They say the first hair must go. Like I don't know after how long they cut the baby's hair… going for rituals with us, normally men shave their hair.*
>
> H: [regarding her grandmother]. She was like so cultural, she would relax her hair but she would not leave it out [uncovered]. She would always tie a doek (scarf) on her hair. Unless she is in the house or she is sleeping then the doek (scarf) comes off. And that is when you will see her hair

The research participants were at pains to deny that there were ethnic or cultural variations in hairstyling practices and initially insisted that the choice of hair styles were 'collected' from the pages of glossy American fashion magazines from where black clients sought to emulate the hairstyling preferences of Hollywood stars. Below I outline some of the interactions between the salon clients and stylists; hairstyling practices as well as the origins of certain styles:

> FN: Client 1 tells Client 2 that she has *kroes hare* (kinky hair) and that she should use real olive oil which will keep it soft. She calls another client over and proceeds to talk about the various hairstyles in the salon catalogue.
>
> *H: Most of our customers will bring a picture from a magazine and they'd say: 'I want Rihanna's hairstyle'. They'd want… a hairstyle, they want Paris Hilton's hairstyle. Mostly our hairstyles come from there (America). I think it comes from America cos like most of the weaves …, like when you see these Brazilian hair (styles), they are the ones that come from there. They have a certain way of doing*

things. They are the ones they come up with and then we copy them I don't know how it comes here.

C: In Africa, I think most people know how to do braiding and cornrows. This weaving thing I think people they… it's from America. That is where they took it from.

And yet, despite the evidence of the widespread use of the magazine as a site of cosmetic consumption and sampling or adjusting hairstyling preferences, and subsequently the hairstyling practices, research participants soon contested the prevailing assumption about the commodification / domestication of African hair.

C: I think that is from us, from African countries, that's where we got this braiding. I think in those days this plait they used to … they used to call it konji. This is fibre. Long ago they used to twist it on your lap. I think this is where all these things came from (taken from a fibrous plant) then they would twist it and it becomes a rope, especially men they roll it on their lap if you roll it on your lap it twists very nice.

H: When we were growing up there was this, this… I don't know how to describe it, but boys used to make thread out of it. They will skin… It's a plant and then you take out the leaves and then you rub it on the floor and then you get white threads… I don't know who gave them the idea but they used to plait with it.

Finally, I also explored with research participants the various hair styling preferences that there are among clients, and the technical styling techniques among stylists. I present participants' responses of how issues of gender and identity are worked out in the context of the hair salon, with specific reference to questions about salience and consumption of distinct styling forms. The stylists give the impression that there are no regimes and horizons for the regulation of styling techniques, but I hope to demonstrate below that they paradoxically engage in narratives of regional differentiation and ultimately the celebration of African hair styling practices:

FN: For instance, both H & C, when fitting a weave make cornrows in a circular manner on the head, then they stitch on the weave with wool, whilst MF and A make

cornrows from the front of the head to the back in neat rows, then they stitch on the weave in the same manner as H & C.

H: when a person comes for braids, they stay with it for like two months. They come and they repair the front and go back. We do advise that you keep a hairstyle for like a month.

C: If somebody wants a short piece it means we have to cut it and shape it and clean it and then I would use a straightener… then with the synthetic one they have already been layered. It is not particular that you must to do it exactly like that… mostly if I do the round one, I can sew my weave… when I do the round one, it is easier for me to sew it in.

FN: At some point in the day I had a conversation with C about how the stylists apply a hair treatment. I asked her if it was necessary to relax the hair before braiding. She said: yes, the hair needs to be treated for it not to break.

FN: I indicated that one of the clients had been in the salon for approximately 6 hours. C then explained the process of braiding, especially when a client comes in with braided hair. It needs to be undone, treated and the re-braided, taking many hours.

FN: They mocked the fact that the weave was used more than once in the past. When the hair was washed, the weave was removed and washed separately and then they wove the synthetic hair back. C laughed and shook her head at this memory.

C: If you look at the way we do hair here in South Africa compared to Western and Eastern Africa, I can say that it is different. Even the different styles: they've got more styles than us, we don't know.

FN: The conversation then shifted to the client who apparently had her hair done elsewhere... H and M then had a conversation about Zambian girls ... that Zambian girls are good, especially with braiding.

C: Cornrows I think they're from particular regions or countries for instance East African countries they use cornrows too much. Because in Zimbabwe, we use to do cornrows, but mainly I think it started from East African countries, because in Zimbabwe we don't have such type of hairstyles.

> *C: I know in Kenya they have Maasai men they do braiding, they braid hair. I don't know if you have ever seen those elaborate hairstyles, [it is] not weaving, not braiding, not dreads or anything, but …do the cornrows and make elaborate … you know it's almost like a sculpture with the hair.*

As I have indicated above, research participants emerged with a vibrant discussion of the diversity of styling practices, in recognition and celebration of the hairstyling techniques from across Africa. These exchanges highlight the very pertinent differences in practices and techniques among African hairstylists be it imagined or authentic.

This chapter provided an ethnographic framework to analyse the context in which this research was conducted. I focused on narratives of migration as it provided me with reasons for migrating and how the migration process has impacted on the research participants. The salon as a research site further presented opportunities for me to explore these women's agency in as far as it related to how they were often imagined as vulnerable and feminised in migration scholarship. Fears and anxieties shared by the stylists about working and living in South Africa, I found it necessary to consider in my analysis the extent to which positionality impacted on my relationship with the research participants.

Chapter 6: Power and Ethics

The objective of this research project was to explore the power relations between the researcher and the research participant when conducting research with migrant women in a hair salon. Scholars such as Donna Haraway (2003), Nancy Hartsock (1983), Sandra Harding (2004) and Patricia Collins (2000) among others, privilege specific standpoint theories as legitimate and valid in a field characterised by its patriarchal, androcentric and epistemological biases. These theorists all depart from the premise that certain power relations are at play in the research process which has an influence on the outcome. They thus challenge 'structures of dominance that systematically marginalise and oppress' (Wylie 2003:26) vulnerable people, particularly women.

Historically, ethical research codes emerged because of structures of dominance of which the aim or result was to oppress those who are vulnerable and marginalised and such codes provide guidelines for researchers when conducting research. Researchers are bound not only by ethics at a procedural level but also at a practical level (Guillemin and Gillam 2004). It is against this background that I am providing an analysis of the value of reflexivity on positionality and dimensions of power as themes that emerged in my study of migrant women engaging in the hairstyling industry in Mowbray, Cape Town. This chapter is concerned with the application of a reflexive approach as encouraged by feminist theory and interrogates the extent to which adopting a reflexive approach promoted or violated ethics in practice. It further seeks to analyse how positionality influences dimensions of power in a research project such as the one undertaken.

6.1 Reflexivity

The practice of reflexivity is deemed critical for ethical research as it addresses issues of power and power relations (Sultana 2007). England asserts that reflexivity is concerned with 'self-critical introspection and self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self' (1994:82). Reflexivity is not restricted to the end of the research project, but rather tends to emerge from the conceptualisation of research to the writing of the research report. Throughout the research process I have endeavoured to remain reflective. Margery Wolf's (1992) reference to the challenges faced by researchers during those first moments in the field certainly rings true when I reflect upon my encounters with various groups and individuals in the field during this research project.

Reflecting about negotiating access to secure a site to conduct my fieldwork, I was presented with a range of ethical challenges. When I first met P, I felt an affinity with her which, upon reflection, was driven by the promise of potentially securing a site to conduct my research.

> FN: (first visit) My heart was pounding and I stumbled across my words. I informed P that I am a student seeking a site to conduct my research and she told me that she was aware of me as her staff had informed her about my previous inquiry.

Some may argue that I had spent too much time seeking to secure a site to conduct my research. Notwithstanding the fact that I had set criteria for site selection, the extent to which I invested time in securing this salon was in my mind the right thing to do, ethically, even though it did not pan out the way I had anticipated. Once I had started negotiating access with P, I felt compelled to pursue this site as I would be faced with several ethical challenges if I did not continue my relationship with her. Would it be ethical to negotiate access with more than one salon and then in the end having to make a choice by selecting one over the other was one of the questions I had grappled with. The decision to spend so much time pursuing P's salon exposed my inexperience as a researcher. Here I was too submissive to the whims of P as she was the one asserting her power and authority. As a novice researcher, I was vulnerable reflecting my inexperience with the issue of balancing the interests of researcher and researched.

> FN: I had not heard anything and I was getting quite anxious. Over the past few days so many thoughts had gone through my mind and I started thinking that perhaps I should start looking for an alternative. I decided to make one last attempt and called P and inquired as to whether they had decided to grant me access or not.

> FN: Upon realising that P's salon was not an option as a research site I felt completely defeated and made the decision to hunt for another salon as a potential site.

Field-notes can reflect the behaviour, opinions and emotions in the field and having made the decision to relinquish my pursuit of P's salon as a possible site and then securing another site, I recorded the following in my field-notes:

> FN: I almost felt like today I was starting my actual fieldwork.

This conveys a sense of excitement of having secured a site. These interactions, emotions and experiences at the beginning of the fieldwork highlight the blurry realities between informed consent and access (Tina Miller and Linda Bell 2012). Miller and Bell argue consent should

be negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the research project (2012:61). Navigating various interactions during fieldwork forms an essential part of developing rapport. As asserted by Meira Weiss, the 'self is always contingent on the conceptualization of the other' (2007:187). As a researcher conducting qualitative research, it is essential to consider how research participants interpret their social realities. In the example below I show that I as the researcher elected to simply listen when H approached me after I had conducted an interview with one of the other stylists. I reflected on the incident and used these moments as a strategy to re-negotiate and continue to build trust. Another strategy I used to soften the lines was by simulating being a client in the same way I simulated being a stylist immersing myself into the life of a stylist even for only a moment.

> FN: After the interview C came and sat next to me and we chatted about general things. C has never done this before and on the one hand it almost seems as if she was curious about what H and I had spoken about and on the other hand it seems that when H was entrusting me with her story, I had almost become the custodian of their narrative.
>
> FN: Today I decided to have my own hair styled as the salon was quiet … HL arrives and assists CB with the twisting of my dreadlocks. I feel at this point all the stylists are used to me and are more relaxed and friendly.
>
> FN: Today I realized that I have become more relaxed and at home in the salon and it hit me that the lines between myself and especially the stylists have become blurred in as far as it relates to the researcher-research participant relations. To maintain a relative distance between myself and the 'other 'has become extremely difficult as we are all now sharing more small personal anecdotes.

Preserving transparency plays a crucial role in retaining ethical practice in the field and my strategy was to offer a copy of my research report to mediate fears and anxiety.

> FN: Today is my last day and while the salon is bustling, not much conversation among the stylists happened… I started to feel sad as the day ended. I thanked everyone for their support and kindness. I thanked the owner privately and told her that I will bring my thesis for her to read once I am done.

The intertwined relationship between me and the research participants created a platform for an engagement of equals which is desirable for conducting ethical research. Ethnographic

research requires the researcher to immerse him or herself in the research context and is based on developing rapport between the researcher and the research participants. Adopting a reflexive approach allows for the researcher to be vigilant and aware of possibilities of harm and injustice to the research participant. Whilst quality is considered a key ingredient for conducting ethical research, the question remains how embedded does one become within the research situation that one sets out to study. Reflexivity during fieldwork and not only at the point of post-fieldwork was a crucial tool for me to ensure that my research objectives were providing a framework for both ethical and reliable research. I distinctly recall a situation during my fieldwork when one of the stylists, who is Ndebele, removed herself from a conversation between myself and the other stylists.

> FN: I asked G what her daughter's name was. K, she says, and smiles. G is not Shona, she is Ndebele, says C. Have you not heard the way she speaks? Her Shona is different to that of H. G does not further interact with the group. Her expression is stern. She starts undoing her daughter's hair and retreats with the child to the back of the salon.

The excerpt demonstrates how an innocent question by the researcher led to discomfort on the part of one of the stylists. This incident made me more aware of the need to be conscious of the impact of my research during conversations on the relationships unfolding between me as the researcher and the people I was interacting with, as well as the interactions between my interlocutors. Adopting a reflexive approach provided me with a locus of control to continuously reflect on my behaviour, opinions and views in relation to the research participants. This approach provided me with a barometer to assess the extent to which I could potentially place the research participant at risk, violate their right to self-determination and agency. Such an approach further allows the researcher to consider the nature and effects of his or her power over not only the research participants but also the research process.

6.2 Positionality

Jeffrey Sluka notes that 'while codes of ethics provide useful guidelines, in the field ethical relationships must be actively, if not creatively, negotiated and adapted to the specifics of the situation or the context' (2012:304). It is thus in this context of the negotiation and adaptation of the terms of engagement between the researcher and the research participant that I recall certain aspects of my fieldwork experience. Negotiating access to my possible research site was fraught with a combination of my own anxieties about being granted access as well as

excitement about whether what I would find would be suited to my research project. Jacobs-Huey (2002) asserts that apparent similarities, by race and gender, do not privilege the researcher to distinct insights when conducting research with a group of people who seem to be faced with a similar social and ideological alienation than s/he. Understanding the discourse of the hair salon as a highly political and social space for black women did not guarantee me the necessary access by virtue of my relative affinity as a consumer of black hair styling practices or the fact that I am a black African woman. I found that in order to understand why African migrant women engaged in this particular hair dressing/styling-business I needed to mediate and negotiate differences between my position as the researcher and the research participants that were not immediately evident upon introduction. I presumed as a black female who frequents these salons as a client that it should be a relatively easy task to negotiate access. Few et al. (2003) cautions against this approach as the differences in terms of ethnicity, class, nationality, sexual orientation etc. are some of the elements that can create barriers between the researcher and the researched. Here I found it useful to reflect on Sherry Ortner's assertion that agency cannot be regarded as an abstract, isolated phenomenon, it 'is always part of … the making and remaking of larger social and cultural formations' (Ortner 2006:134). As such, when I met P, the owner of the first hair salon I sought to use as my research site, I was initially excited about the seemingly firm possibility of being allowed to use her salon as my research site but later found that she facilitated her own agency (as refusal) by frustrating my attempt to formalise my access to her salon. Perceptions of my own characteristics as a black female doing research among black females in this instance did not guarantee me access to the research site - on the contrary it was perhaps problematic to expect open access on this basis by itself.

I often wondered if my interaction with P may have been too insistent as I sought to gain access to her salon. Upon reflecting on my conduct, I realise that I feared my efforts to be perceived as being coercive in my engagement with P's salon. During the 'negotiating access phase' I had to assume a critical reflexive perspective with regards to my expectations of the research. I critically reflected on whether I was I trying to subtly coerce or seduce P by suggesting that, although I knew nothing about hairstyling and the industry, I was willing to learn and help at the salon. Did my actions place undue pressure upon P, unintentionally so? Was my apparent transparency only informed by good intentions, I asked myself. I am reminded by Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) assertion that it is ethics in practice that matters as much as procedural ethics' expectation that the researcher must adhere to. I remained

anxious throughout this period as to whether I expected too much from the research participants, or whether I was being too timid as a novice researcher. Notwithstanding all the possible scenarios as to why I was unable to gain access to P's salon as my research site, P retained and asserted her authority over this very private yet very public space through frustrating my access to the point that I resolved to pursue other avenues.

My position as a student seeking a research site appeared to have been handled quite differently compared to my position as a client. The latter being a commercial, contractual relationship characterised by an exchange of goods and service whereas the former would possibly be characterised by a relentless, inquiring gaze into the lives and histories of people and in this instance migrants. It is therefore not surprising that P sought to assert her power by ultimately denying me access to her salon as a site in which I could conduct my research. Of course, I understand that from her perspective this incident and my decision to move on could be interpreted as my failure to 'pass' her prerequisite test, which she may have regarded as necessary for mediating my access to the operations of the salon.

In comparison, I found that when I was negotiating access to M's salon, I was confronted with a different set of ethical considerations. She had made it clear right from the start that while I would be granted access to do research in the salon, the main condition was that she would determine my access to, and participation in the salon. P asserted her power through denying me access to her salon as my research site. Comparatively, M sought to assert her authority by restricting my access. The fact that she took my student details reflected her confidence and assumed authority by seeking to confirm that I was indeed claiming who I was – a student.

I am reminded by April, L. Few et. al. that 'idiosyncrasies are embedded in our identities that inevitably create moments of intimacy and distance between the informant and the researcher' (2003:207). M's agreement to grant me conditional access to her salon could have been interpreted as undue restriction or hostility or caution. Negotiating access in the face of apparent hostility is not uncommon and this was demonstrated in the case of Sudhir Venkatesh who disposed of his neatly delineated questionnaire while conducting research in Chicago's poorest black neighbourhoods and immersed himself into the gang culture as a means of data collection. Mocked and ignored, he persisted, negotiated and later became the custodian of their narrative when he was sought after by one of the gang members who provided him with the gang's financial records in the hope to leave a legacy for his children

(Levitt and Dubner 2006). The fact that I would only be allowed to attend the salon at agreed times was the beginning of several exchanges around my role as a researcher – but I recognised her need to retain control over the exchanges with me and I agreed to her terms which made it possible for our relationship to grow into one of relative intimacy and trust. The changing nature of this researcher-researched relationship was most striking when several weeks later, almost as if taken for granted, M suspended the conditions of my access:

> FN: As I was leaving, she asked me whether I would be in the following day and I said: yes. The significance of this moment was the fact that the next day was a Saturday and we had agreed that I would not come to the salon over the weekends.

This signified a key moment in the relationship with M as the salon owner. I felt that I had earned her trust. The weeks of patient waiting, watching, listening and simply being around had finally paid off. It struck me that as much as I was observing the stylists in the work context and exchanges with clients during my early weeks at M's, I too was under surveillance and being watched, as we engaged in a careful dance around issues of intentionality, transparency and trust.

As a researcher, I sought to utilise, consciously and unconsciously, narratives of intimacy and distance between the researcher and research participant (April L. Few et.al. 2003) to mediate my position as the researcher in relation to the salon stylists. Scholars such as Few et.al and Oakley (1981) emphasise the need for sharing information about oneself as a researcher with the research participant as a valuable strategy, in the same manner that a lack of sharing could potentially lead to mistrust on the part of the research participant (Few et.al 2003, Oakley 1981). It was in these moments of sharing intimacies about childhood and hair, when I had made the conscious decision to 'expose' my vulnerability in the field by shifting my position - if only for a moment - from the researcher to that of a woman who was confronted with similar issues to that of the research participants. It was through reflecting on these moments of intimacy that I was reminded of Sherif's (2000) assertion about the inevitability of tensions between her academic objectives and her familial ties in relation to her study population. Within the context of the hair salon the researcher-research participant relationship was consistently under construction, constantly being mediated, tested and renegotiated and as such I had to remain both critical and vigilant about my position as a researcher with a specific agenda (Sultana 2007; England 1994).

That conditional access to the salon was given by M, the salon owner, and, upon building rapport, conditional access was lifted is an example of how my relationship with the salon owner changed. Through the strategic and intermittent sharing of narratives of childhood, hair and my own migration experiences, I could create a platform to develop rapport with the stylists which emerged as a critical and necessary practice in my ethnographic research. Anne Oakley (1981), in her narrative about her experience with young women's transition to motherhood, argues that refusing to share personal accounts or to give feedback to research participants limits rapport.

> FN: The first of these exchanges occurred on a day when I decided to have my own hair styled as the salon was quiet … HL arrives and assists CB with the twisting of my dreadlocks. I feel at this point all the stylists are used to me and were more relaxed and friendly. HL asks me why my dreadlocks were shorter in the front than at the back. I relayed a crisis situation in my life that led to me cutting my hair and she commented that I must have been very angry as this is the only time women tend to do something so drastic with their hair.

During an interview with H, I recounted some of my personal experiences relating to hair and my experiences as a foreigner:

> HS: When I was growing up, my mom used to do cornrows for me, right. She believed that it's either cornrows or natural afro, there was no relaxing, no, none of that, umm… I was in grade 11 and I cried and I cried. Cos now I'm in high school I'm in grade 11 and I'm still walking around in this little afro style (H: giggles). Eventually my mother said it's ok, have it, …it burned my scalp so I was like, ok, that's the reason why she was reluctant (H: giggles) because it was complete virgin hair, I never had any relaxer in my hair, nothing, and then it burned my scalp and then my brother shaved off all my hair and then I was worse off.
>
> HS: I went to university in the United Kingdom and I didn't have a scholarship. My family comes from a working-class background so there was no chance that they would send money to me. … I'd go to work in the morning and I worked as a catering assistant, so in the mornings I would do the morning shift, then go to school and catch the evening shift. I did all sort of things, cleaning toilets, you name it, I've done it.

Similarly, during my interview with C, I recounted the following:

> HS: My mom passed away when I was doing my undergraduate studies, in my third year and I was studying in the United Kingdom at that time. I had to come home and it was just before my exams and then I came for the funeral, stayed for a couple of weeks and then I went back to write my exams.

Sharing moments of loss, personal tribulations and experiences of living abroad provided a snapshot into the intimate relationship between me as the researcher and the research participants. It appeared that whilst still cautious, the research participants became more at ease with my presence. However, despite making myself vulnerable and sharing intimately of myself, the strategy did not resolve all the stylists' possible anxieties about me being "an outsider" The anxieties and tension about insider-outsider binary positions as variously advocated (Barker 1984; Pitman 2002; Sherif 2001; Weiss 2007) is a challenge faced by almost every researcher. I was not immune to such anxieties and it was evident in my encounter with one of the research participants, a stylist, during an informal discussion when I approached her about a possible interview. During this encounter, she cited her limited English as a reason for not being willing or able to grant me an interview. Despite my assurances that it would not be a problem, she assertively refused to be interviewed.

> FN: My English is not so well, Henrietta, I think it would probably be better for you to interview CB because hers is better.

Since most of these salon owners are from elsewhere on the African continent, language proved to be an obvious barrier to effectively carry out this research. Language plays an important role in building trust and English as the common language was a key factor in the kind of access I was granted to the salon. I thus concluded that either the stylist was fearful of the possible questions about her status as a foreigner living in South Africa and thus place her in an uncomfortable position, or that she felt intimidated by my position as a 'scholar' or perhaps she simply just did not feel comfortable or able to articulate her thoughts, ideas and feelings in the English language. Chen (2011) contends that in ethnographic interviewing the spoken language between the interviewer and the interviewee often affects the power dynamics in the dialogue and that power is thus always negotiated. In my own research, I found that I more easily secured formal 'substantive interviews' with Anglophone stylists, while my exchanges with the Francophone stylists, who spoke French, and I am unfamiliar with the language, remained brief, anecdotal and preliminary. I think that the short-term

nature of my research project limited my opportunities to develop rapport with the French-speaking stylists.

It thus appears that language at various stages of the research project could either alienate or draw the researcher and the research participant closer. As noted by Chen (2011), language does impact on the nature of the researcher-researched relations. Thus, language can be activated as a means for mediating social relations and power relations between the researcher and the research participants. As a researcher, I was conscious of my inability to converse with the research participants in one or more of their various home languages. I was also aware that although English was the language of our engagements, the stylists would often converse in their own language, leaving me frustrated and excluded from their conversations. At no point did I seek to inquire about conversation conducted in their respective languages, because I assumed also that, apart from it being in the normal order of conduct within the salon, it also provided a means through which these women could contain my intrusion into every aspect of their social and work lives. They retained their agency through language by being able to exclude me in their private conversations. April Few et.al noted that the researcher should be cognisant of 'personal appearance, body movement, [and] language as a social status maker… [that] connote… a privilege [and that] can drive a wedge or cement the informant-researcher relationship' (2003:211). In this instance the research participants asserted their positions as insiders by conversing in their mother-tongue, thereby ring-fencing a number of issues from my ethnographic gaze and academic inquiry and at times also some of their co-workers from the possible content of their conversations, as not all the stylists understood each other's languages. Language in both instances cited above drove a wedge – at times necessary and deliberate - between me as the researcher and the research participants.

> FN: Throughout the morning each group (Zimbabwean and Congolese stylists) conversed in their own languages and I did not understand a word that was spoken.
>
> FN: The conversation in the salon evolved around food but I was unable at this point to hear much of the conversation as it was either inaudible or the stylists spoke to each other in their own language.

The contestation and anxiety about the insider-outsider relationship prevailed throughout the fieldwork experience. At times, I felt that I agonised too much about every aspect of power and position in the research relationship and wondered whether such reflexivity might be

regarded as almost attempting to manage, manipulate and direct every interaction. I thus return to Patricia Collins's (1991) assertion that the interlocking nature, herein referring to race, gender and class, of the oppression between the researcher and research participant could either aid or constrain the relationship. This was demonstrated by my encounters with P's salon and later with M's salon in relation to locating a research site. At times stylists seemingly used their respective languages to exclude me from certain aspects of their conversation. These exclusions may not have been deliberate and could be influenced by variables outside of the researcher-researched relationship.

Notwithstanding my anxieties about language and the limited access I had as a consequence, whether intentional or incidental, I felt that my presence in the salon was increasingly recognised and affirmed during the course of the fieldwork. I recall that on one occasion a stylist asked me if I know how to braid and then invited me to assist her:

> FN: At some point in the day I was invited by C to assist with untying the braids of one of the clients. The two Congolese stylists had been working on the client's hair and asked if I knew how to braid, to which I responded: yes. The owner, together with someone whom she obviously had a close relationship with also joined in with washing and treating the client's hair.

This event marked another critical turn in recognition of my position within the salon. Although not wholly regarded as an insider, I was afforded a revised status as that of an associate. In this moment, all tensions and anxieties around language and hierarchy were dissolved for me as even the shop owner joined in the activities and we all conversed in English and I could participate in the types of salon activity I had until that moment only been able to observe. My apparent insider status was embraced and validated by this event, but what could be considered as part of a longer interaction of exchanges about shared history and shared identities came into play which at times made it difficult to retain my idea of what objectivity should be in my research. As my research is located within a Feminist framework, I concur with Rose when she asserts that 'feminist methodology seeks to bring together subjective and objective ways of knowing the world' (1982:368). So, at times as a participant observing phenomena in the field allows some level of distance between the researcher and the research participant and at times, as participating in the social world, there is little social distance between the researcher and the research participant.

Whilst I had developed familiar and casual relations with the research participants in the salon, I was also on occasion reminded of my temporary status and conditional admission into this site. An exchange with P, the care-taker manager while M was away, reflected the ambivalent nature of the researcher-research participant or gate-keeper relationship:

> FN: I arrived late today and was reprimanded by P who informed me that we'd need to talk about such behaviour… At the end of the day, as I was leaving, P informed me that I will get fired next time I am late but that she would see me the next Monday.

While my position as a researcher and presence in the salon had become firmly established, towards the end of my research I became increasingly aware of my responsibilities and status as a researcher as I prepared to exit. Reflexivity advocates for a position of critical reflection as to the role of the researcher throughout the fieldwork experience as well as post-fieldwork analysis. While I had agreed with the research participants that I would provide them with a copy of my research report, I was confronted again by my privileged position as a guardian of their narratives, interpreter of their experiences, and of their actions, and finally the difference between us that was inherent in me being able to retreat to the environment of the university.

> FN: To maintain a relative distance between myself and the 'other' has become extremely difficult as we are all now sharing more little personal anecdotes.

> FN: Today is my second last day at the salon and I feel like I have only just started developing a relationship with the stylists and to some degree with the owner of the salon. Before I left for the day, I told the girls that the following day will be my last day but that I will come to visit and let HL treat my dreadlocks on a regular basis. H says that she is going to miss having me around.

I wish to conclude this section by reiterating that the researcher-researched position within the research setting is hardly fixed but is a position that is influenced by a range of variables (Sultana 2007). It is my view that ethics in practice is where the issue of politics is of utmost importance and where it can likely undermine the validity and rigour of the research endeavour. I maintained a reflexive approach throughout my research as this allowed me to continuously assess that I do no harm or at any time compromise the agency of any of the research participants. One of the key elements amiss in my research, which is discussed later in this chapter, is the issue of informed consent. In this instance, I assumed consent by proxy once I had gained access to the research site. It was only upon reflection in my writing that I could identify this ethical challenge.

It is the politics of positionality than can significantly interfere or undermine the researcher-researched relationship and as such does in fact "cause harm" when one would be unaware of how the researcher's position or agenda gets in the way. The case of Pitman (2002), when she mistakenly 'outed' her lesbian research participant, reminds us of the shifting nature of the researcher-researched relationship. Similarly, Owen's (2005) account of her interaction with her male research participants from the DRC and the extent to which she was eroticised/threatened by one of her participants during her fieldwork, left her feeling vulnerable. Adopting a reflexive position about the researcher-researched dynamics throughout the fieldwork experience lends itself to conducting ethical research but such reflection may also be of importance for using these interactions to find meaning in the participants' views of the researcher's positionality. Taking a reflexive approach exposes the researcher's position of power (Lorraine Nencel 2014) which presents the researcher with the necessary tools to ensure that ethical research is not compromised. Relations of power are often tied in with the researcher's positionality.

While there may have been commonalities between myself as the researcher and the research participants, I held a position of privilege. My initial assertion relating the similarities I held with the research participants in terms of positionality was challenged by this research project. Despite the correlation between myself and the research participants in terms of having lived in a foreign country and being subjected to the scrutiny of immigration officers, my experience and my journey thereof was very different and privileged. Privileged by the fact that I had the luxury of flying to a European country, coupled with a job opportunity albeit low level employment, in some regards these privileges protected me from the type of abuse experienced by the stylists from the South African immigration officers. Notwithstanding the careful consideration of power and ethics procedurally, in practice my position as a South African citizen, my privileged access to education and my middle-class lifestyle influenced the research project somewhat. The relationship between myself and the salon owner was certainly different from the relationship with the stylists and it is in retrospect that I realise the power dimensions of my positionality in more sharp detail. The caution I exercised because of the initial stumbling block of being denied access influenced the way I proceeded with the research project. My sensitivity to the power held by the owner regarding access certainly played a role in my relationship with the stylists.

I wish to turn to Bell and Miller's (2012) issue of access and informed consent. They assert that it is often difficult to identify a distinct difference between informed consent and access

(2012:63). Whilst the owner of the salon granted me access to her salon to conduct my research, I had simply assumed access to observe the stylists. I to an extent legitimised my presence and access through my negotiation with the salon owner and neglected to seek consent from each of the stylists, barring verbal consent from those interviewed. This presents an ethical dilemma for me as a researcher as I unconsciously legitimised my access to the stylists through the salon owner. I sought to find legitimacy for my presence through building rapport with the stylists and by being clear about the reason for my presence. The shortcoming herein, referring to gaining consent by proxy from the salon owner, led me to consider such oversight as an ethical challenge in practice. This I only realised upon writing up my findings and upon reflection on my own conduct.

Whilst as the researcher I held power over the conceptualisation of the research project as well as the research design, research participants held the power over contact and personal narratives. Access to the research participants was mediated through three key strategies. Firstly, through refusal, with P denying access to her salon as the research site. Secondly, through provisional access and avoidance, with M's initial agreement to approve access on the one hand and on the other hand avoiding being interviewed. The third strategy points to self-silencing. MF, throughout the fieldwork period whilst conversing in English to clients and colleagues alike, opted to not be interviewed and cited her limited knowledge of the English languages as the reason. Not surprisingly, these strategies impacted greatly on the outcome of the research project as an interview with MF or any of the stylists from the DRC would have given me greater insight into their journey as migrants and how they ended up in the salon in Mowbray.

The context within which migrants in South Africa are imagined is loaded with suspicion and mistrust. Recent national xenophobic attacks and ongoing marginalisation of migrants in South Africa are attributed to what Crush describes as a struggle for political and socio-economic resources (Crush 2000). This begs the question as to what are the implications for positionality and push back? As a South African conducting research with African migrants I was initially received with some hostility and it appears that these migrants asserted themselves as the ones in power in an environment over which they held the power. Mackenzie et.al. (2007) caution researchers against causing possible harm when conducting research with refugees and asylum seekers and recommend attention is paid to principles of consent and autonomy. As my research was focused on migrant women, I wish to consider ways in which the possible status of the documented and undocumented persons impacted on

their respective attitudes toward me as the researcher as well as the implications thereof for research in general. As my position was firmly and clearly described to the stylists as a researcher by the owner, this accentuated my privilege. Notwithstanding the fact that we all shared similar experiences of having once or at that time being marginalised as women and migrants in another country, my status as a South African and a privileged student certainly had an impact on the attitudes of all the research participants towards me. During the conceptualisation phase I consider my understanding of the anxieties and tensions of being a foreigner at some point in my life to be an advantage to building rapport with the research participants. In practice, I was allowed insider status intermittently and remained under careful surveillance.

Incidentally, the women of francophone origin remained distant and at times deliberately excluded me from their conversations by conversing in French. These two stylists furthermore refused to grant me an interview. I am reminded by the different reasons why people migrate, herein referring to Simone's (2000) reference to economic reasons and political instability. Both women migrated to South Africa because of political and economic instability in their home country. I am left with two scenarios. One, these women exercised their autonomy by refusing to be interviewed for fear of their status as asylum seekers, or for the possible re-living of traumatic experiences at home or on their journey as refugees. This is what Robert H. McLaughlin and Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp (2015) deem a vulnerability which is not always recognised as significant in the scholarship on ethics. Alternatively, the stylists simply chose to exercise their right not to participate.

Therefore, regardless of whether documented or undocumented, as an indicator of power and vulnerability, migrants nonetheless can assert, mediate and manage a researcher's access to their narratives and lived experiences. The next part of this analysis explores further issues of power where I examine how power was activated, negotiated and expressed by women migrants.

6.3 Power

Power is at the centre of any research project and even more so when studying vulnerable groups or individuals at risk. Whilst some may argue that migrant workers (refugees and asylum seekers) are not necessarily considered as vulnerable, I concur with Mackenzie et. al. (2007) in their assertion that migrants should be considered vulnerable by virtue of their status and the potential traumatic experience invoked because of research. Notwithstanding

the fact that at times as researchers we do research where the risk of harm is minimal, there are always dimensions of power involved. Unequal relations of power and an imbalance of power have an impact on ethics and more so, ethics in practice. I wish to return to Diane Wolf's (1996) view on the interrelated dimensions of power. Whilst she distinguishes between three dimensions of power, I wish to focus only on her assertion of power exerted during the research process. During the conceptualisation phase of my research project, I considered a range of possible scenarios as to the power relations within the field. Therefore, I was acutely aware of power relations that played out in practice.

The next section is concerned with examining the ways in which migrant women assert their power and the interplay of power and research within the research setting. From the onset, as discussed earlier, M asserted her authority by regulating my access as the researcher when I negotiated access to her salon. The salon is a site of exchange. The vulnerability and exertion of agency of the migrant women emerged during an exchange between one of the stylists and the Minister of Home Affairs (South Africa). The Minister was a regular client at the salon. It was apparent during this exchange that the stylist's challenge with obtaining the correct documentation as a migrant in South Africa was an ongoing struggle for her and that the salon provided a space for her from which to engage the Minister who had the ultimate power in terms of granting the correct documentation.

> FN: The Minister inquired about MF's status issue (refugee/asylum) to which she replied that she had a problem with obtaining the correct documentation. The Minister called her office and instructed her staff to deal with the matter immediately. She further instructed MF to speak with M who will contact her if she (MF) had any further problems with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) …

I wish to return to Passer and Mahler's concept of power geometries which makes it possible to analyse how migrants' social locations affect their production and experience of migration (Pessar and Mahler 2003:817). The salon is both a hub of economic activity as well as a space for social interaction. It is here where migrant women could engage with one another at a social, economic and political level. The commodification of hair had created an environment in which migrant women could assert their power and in so doing facilitate their own agency. M as the owner of this salon – a business – employed the stylists and sub-let part of the salon to another business person. As independent contractors and through trading hairstyles and sharing resources these women could facilitate their own mobility. The salon

thus in essence was a powerful location where there was an interplay of various dimensions of power. However, whilst all the stylists, including the owner were married, very little reference was made to relations with husbands. One can infer that the gendered dimensions of power in relation to their husbands remained private whilst these migrant women appeared to have a level of economic independence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore the dimensions of power between the researcher and the research participants (African migrants) in a hair salon setting and the ethical implications thereof. It further sought to gain an understanding of why migrant women engage in the hairstyling industry.

In preparation for the empirical study, I drew on a range of literature pertaining to ethics and used a thematic approach to review the relevant material related to research ethics, women's mobility, and migration. Through a systematic review of key historical debates, I was able to highlighted those debates in research ethics that foregrounded and shaped the development of ethics in relation to, and the context of gendered ethnographies. This exploration provided this study with a theoretical foundation that framed this study of women experiences in the context of migration in Southern Africa. This study also revealed that while there is an increasing number of academic engagements with migrant women's experiences in the global South, few of these deliberately reflect on the issue of ethics and power between the research and the researched. What I found in my study was that migrant women do facilitate their own agency.

Theoretically, my analysis was meaningfully informed by an intersectional approach to interrogate the relations of power and the roles and space migrant women occupy. Through initially framing my investigation within a Black Feminist Standpoint approach, this allowed me to work through a lens that allowed me to consider the dimensions of power within a research setting where I, as a black female researcher, was studying migrant black female research participants. This presented me with both challenges and privilege insofar as I firstly, learnt on the one hand the power I had in the research process was limited to what I was able to control and on the other hand the research participants held power over their participation and my access to their narratives. Secondly, I saw the extent to which migrant women navigate their own agency beyond my study and how they rely on support networks from their home country. The second theoretical resource that informed my reflections was postcolonial theory because it provided a useful optic through which I was able to consider narratives of resistance and self-determination. From my engagements with hair stylists in the Salons of the Mowbray neighbourhood of Cape Town, I learnt that stylists and owners exercised their agency as women, as migrants and as individuals entitled to refuse/ permit my access to the salon as a site and life worlds, and at other times through self-silencing when refusing to be interviewed, determining the measure of their participation through language and topics discussed, and finally through asserting conditions of my access to and participation in the research site.

I found that researching gender and labour in hairstyling salons disrupts the traditional understandings and perception of African women's migration as primarily dependents of men, and accompanying family. These women had established themselves as entrepreneurs and skilled labour migrants who have marketable skills independent of their domestic relations and contexts. Further, the study also reveals that migrant women, through hairstyling, increase and expand their labour skillsets, which disrupts those partner-dependent forms of labour they are traditionally perceived to engage in. The salon is considered more than simply a site for engaging hairstyling practices but it is a site of self-fashioning – cosmetically, economically and socio-politically.

As this study was both methodological and ethnographic in nature one of the main methodological challenges I faced was the issue of informed consent. The circumstances under which consent was obtained is not only a methodological challenge but also an ethical challenge. It was only upon reflection in my analysis I realised that I assumed consent by proxy. Methodologically, I was required to innovate a means of access that but ethically I felt restricted insofar as I had consent by proxy. I would argue that ethically and methodologically consent by proxy was permissible insofar as my innovation did not undermine the women's agency, autonomy or anonymity.

Research of ethics and power in a research situation requires critical reflexivity and the need to be vigilant about changing conditions and not necessarily assume access at the onset of the research project as sufficient, but to accept that access to the field is constantly under negotiation, depending on the changing fortunes or positions of both the researcher and the researched. Ethics and power in researching African migrant women's labour production opens up understandings and articulations of African women migrants as self-determining agents and not simply as dependents, which can contribute to the field of migration studies.

In my study of ethics and power in researching this relatively vulnerable group, the use of a postcolonial feminist approach and a gendered research ethics opened up possibilities for understanding migrant women's experiences that would not have otherwise been available, nor made visible through traditional ethnographic research. While this puts enormous ethical demands on the researcher and the researched, engaging this complex field opens access to fields of knowledge about African women's self-fashioning in relation to migration, labour and identity.

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